FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
UNIVERZITY KARLOVY
V PRAZE

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

The Satanic Verses: In Quest of Identities

Satanské verše: Hledání identit

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí bakalářské práce (supervisor):

PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., M.A.

Praha, září 2011

Prague, September 2011

Zpracovala (author):

Petra Poncarová

Studijní obor (subject/s):

anglistika-amerikanistika / dánská studia

English and American / Danish Studies

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned. I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury. Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

Prague, 22 August 2011 ……

I would like to dedicate this work to PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., M.A., for her inexhaustible patience with me and inspiring supervision, to my first readers for their support and helpful comments, and to Salman Rushdie for his meaningful books.

Tuto práci věnuji PhDr.Soně Novákové, CSc., M.A. za její nevyčerpatelnou trpělivost a inspirativní vedení, mým prvním čtenářům za jejich podporu a podnětné komentáře, a Salmanu Rushdiemu za jeho významem nabité knihy.

Prague, 22 August 2011 …….

Abstract in English

This thesis is concerned with the theme of identity in Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, namely with the metamorphoses of identity in relation to space. The issue of space and identity comprises both the analysis of the concrete locations and their impact on human beings, but also broader topics such as the mass migration in the second half of the 20th century. The novel is (in)famous mainly for the charge of blasphemy that was brought against it, and for the international controversy that followed its publication, but this thesis tries to read the novel as a literary work of art, as a manifestation of free authorial imagination which nevertheless addresses many issues of great social and political relevance. The first chapter defines the scope of the thesis, its methods and main theoretical sources; the second begins the actual discussion of identity: how are identities presented at the beginning of the novel. This chapter also briefly introduces some theoretical attitudes to identity. The relation of identity to space is the topic of the third chapter. Salman Rushdie's writing in general is characterized by the author's deep interest in the transformations of human identity under the influence of migration, and in *The Satanic Verses*, this theme becomes both the formal and the thematic axis of the novel. Migration is closely connected with issues such as border-crossing and diaspora, and these are also discussed in the third chapter. The individual locations of the novel (cities, the air, sacred places, etc.) are the subject matter of the fourth chapter, while the fifth explores the link between identity and movements across different places, be it a pilgrimage or a homecoming. The final conclusion compares the way identities are presented at the beginning and their shape at the end of the novel. It also attempts at articulating some solutions the novel provides for living under "the postmodern condition". Gibreel and Saladin, two main characters of the novel, their different characteristics and remarkable fortunes provide an opportunity for reflections on the limits of free will, on the construction of identity, and on the complex cultural intersections at the end of the 20th century.

Key Words: Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, identity, space, migration, diaspora, border-crossing, post-colonialism, hybridity

Abstrakt v českém jazyce

Tato práce se zabývá tématem identity v románu Salmana Rushdieho *Satanské verše*, a to zejména jejími proměnami v souvislosti s prostorem. Téma prostoru a identity v této práci zahrnuje jak rozbor vlivu konkrétních míst na vývoj a proměny lidské osobnosti, tak i zamyšlení nad širšími tematickými okruhy jako je například masová migrace ve druhé polovině dvacátého století. *Satanské verše* vstoupily do širšího povědomí díky nařčení z rouhačství a mezinárodní kontroverzi, kterou jejich vydání vyvolalo. Tato práce si nicméně klade za cíl zkoumat knihu jakožto literární dílo, projev svobodného autorského smýšlení, které se však vyjadřuje k mnoha akutním otázkám mimořádného politického a společenského významu. V první, úvodní kapitole je představeno vymezení práce, metody a hlavní použitá literatura. Kapitola druhá již uvádí vlastní téma identity: jakým způsobem je pojednáno na počátku románu a rovněž naznačuje několik možných přístupů k identitě jako takové. Třetí kapitola se zabývá přímo vztahem identity a prostoru. Celou literární tvorbu Salmana Rushdieho charakterizuje hluboký zájem o proměny lidské osobnosti pod vlivem migrace a v *Satanských verších* se tato problematika ocitá v samém centru pozornosti. S migrací úzce souvisí i širší otázka překračování hranic a vzniku diasporických komunit. Čtvrtá kapitola přináší detailnější pohled na některá důležitá dějiště románu (velkoměsta, vzdušný prostor, posvátná místa apod.). Pátá kapitola zkoumá vztah identity a pohybu mezi různými místy, ať už se jedná o náboženskou pouť, odchod z domova či naopak návrat domů. Závěrečné shrnutí porovnává pojetí identit na začátku a na konci románu a snaží se pojmenovat východiska, jaká *Satanské verše* nabízí pro život pod tlakem „postmoderní situace“. Dva hlavní představitelé románu, jejich rozdílné povahy a podivuhodné osudy poskytují prostor pro úvahy o možnosti člověka vytvořit svou vlastní identitu, svobodně se rozhodovat a také o složitém prolínání kultur v posledních desetiletích.

Klíčová slova: Salman Rushdie, *Satanské verše*, identita, prostor, migrace, diaspora, překračování hranic, postkolonialismus, hybridita

Table of contents

1. Introduction 7
1.1 Topic and Outline 7
1.2 Method and Theoretical Frameworks 9
2. Identity at the Beginning 11
2.1 Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha 13
2.2 Attitudes to Identity 17
2.2.1 Stable Identities 18
2.2.2 Moving Identities 22
3. Space 29
3.2 Borders 30
3.3 Migration 32
3.4 Diaspora 35
4. Locations 39
4.1 Cities 41
4.1.1 London 43
4.1.2 Bombay 45
4.1.3 Jahilia 47
4.2 Shaandaar Café 48
4.3 Sacred Places, Profane Places 49
4.4 The Air 51
5. Movements 53
5.1 Quests, Journeys and Pilgrimages 53
5.2 Homeleaving and Homecoming 55
6. Conclusion 58

1. Introduction

> *A man who sets to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see the pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him sociopolitically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security of our secret selves.*[1]

1.1 Topic and Outline

The Satanic Verses is an extensive and difficult novel, consisting of multiple stories that speak in numerous voices and touch a vast number of problems ranging from immigration hardships to crises of love affairs. Saleem Sinai's famous observation, placed as a kind of warning sign at the beginning of *Midnight's Children*, "I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well"[2] may be readily applied to the reading skills required for dealing with *The Satanic Verses*.

Even though more than two decades have passed since the year 1988 when the novel was published and the series of ominous and disturbing events that became known as the "Rushdie Affair" began, *The Satanic Verses* has been, is and probably will be a novel famous – or notorious – mainly for its political and social impact, although a great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to its rendition of post-colonial issues or its use of narrative strategies. This thesis tries to treat *The Satanic Verses* rather as a work of art and free authorial imagination, as a testimony raising many issues of great contemporary importance: in Catherine Cundy's words, "as an artistic enterprise rather than a cultural and political crisis,"[3] even though some critics argue that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to read the book as if the Affair never happened.[4]

In this thesis, several aspects of the novel, both of form and content, will be discussed. In the case of a work so comprehensive and ambiguous, it is perhaps impossible, foolish and even dangerous to look for anything like a single theme, to state what the novel is "about". However, there seems to be at least one issue that recurs many times throughout the book, and

[1] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 2006) 49.
[2] Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Pan Books, 1982) 9.
[3] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 65.
[4] Peter Jones, "*The Satanic Verses* and the Politics of Identity", *Reading Rushdie*, ed. By M.D.Fletcher (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) 321.

on various levels – the whole novel might be read as a chronicle of various quests for identity, be it personal, cultural or religious. Peter Jones notes that "identity' is a category of which he [Rushdie] makes frequent use and which is at the centre of the issues and experiences explored in *The Satanic Verses*."[5] Identity is the thematic and formal axis of the novel also in Søren Frank's reading, and he stresses its interest in roots and uprootedness, stagnation and flux, continuity and discontinuity.[6]

The word "quest" in the title is employed for its connotations of an adventurous journey undertaken in search of something valuable, since both the worthiness of the outcome and the notion of spatial movement are vital to this thesis. In order not to get drowned in the deep and wide "sea of stories" the novel provides, the issue of identity in *The Satanic Verses* will be perceived in its relation to space. Places matter in the formation of identity, and so do movements performed between them, but the importance is of space is not to be limited to tangible places only – identity is also influenced by the cultural or linguistic space, and the novel itself represents a special kind of space.[7] This "spatial" orientation will hopefully allow the theme of identity in the novel to be seen from as many different angles and in as many thought-provoking contexts as possible within the scope given to this analysis.

In his brief summary of the novel, the author himself uses a topographical metaphor when referring to identity, and his view of the central subject of the novel is similar to the critical observations quoted above:

> *The Satanic Verses* is the story of two painfully divided selves. In the case of one, Saladin, the division is secular and societal: he is torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West. For the other, Gibreel Farishta, the division is spiritual, a rift in the soul. He has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so. The novel is "about" their quest for wholeness.[8]

[5] Jones, 325.
[6] Søren Frank, *Salman Rushdies Kartografi* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2003) 148.
[7] While *The Satanic Verses* contains some places and creates other, the novel itself may be also considered a unique space with its own characteristic features. The structure of *The Satanic Verses* reflects the themes of the novel. It is a "dialogical space" (Bakhtin, *Román jako dialog*, Praha: Odeon, 1980) that allows many voices to be heard, in terms of languages, speakers and registers. The structural parallelim of the individual story lines and the echoing names, phrases and situations reflect the thematic parallelism, and the uncertain narrative situation mirrors one of the main arguments of the novel – that doubt is the inevitable condition of life.
[8] Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992) 398.

1.2 Method and Theoretical Frameworks

The main interest of this thesis is the issue of identity in *The Satanic Verses*. In the first chapter, the topic is addressed in relation to the beginning of the novel – what the departure point is, with what assumptions does the novel start, what are the identities like at the beginning. The introductory chapter also provides a brief overview over some of the possible attitudes to identity. The following chapters pursue the theme of identity in relation to space, and explore such notions as Migration, Diaspora or Home. After observing the metamorphoses of identities in the novel in relation to various spaces, the concluding chapter tries to work out whether the identities evolve somehow in the novel, how different spaces influence them, and in what respect do the identities acquired / accepted / created throughout the novel differ from those encountered at the beginning. The discussion of identities is concerned mainly with the fortunes of Gibreel and Saladin, even though other characters are not omitted completely: one reason being the limited range of this thesis, another is the factual prominence of these two characters in the novel.[9]

In all the chapters, one phenomenon reappears rather frequently – the unique cohesion of form and content that is typical not only for *The Satanic Verses*, but for Rushdie's writing in general. Undoubtedly, the formal aspects somehow affect the content and the reader's perception in all literary works of fiction, and the other way round. However, with some authors, this relation of form and content seems to be more prominent and a possible change in the form would mean an irreparable shift in the meaning. The writing of Salman Rushdie arguably represents an example of the kind of literature where the form and the content are entwined, where the both constituents of the work of art cooperate and correspond with each other in order to express the author's ideas.

Rushdie speaks, for example, about the hybrid culture of today's globalized world, and he does so in a hybrid language that is formed by bits and pieces of English, Urdu and Hindi (to name just a few sources of his linguistic alchemy) and interlaced by manifold allusions of most diverse provenances. One of the prominent themes of his works is the impossibility to distinguish reality and fiction, and in his novels, some fictions may prove so powerful and useful that they materialize,[10] and Rushdie often communicates this point by employing

[9] As Søren Frank points out, the story of the two actors fills 5/7 of the novel's space, and the other layers (Ayesha and the villagers of Titlipur; Mahound) are in some or other way incorporated in this one. They do not lack their own narrative drive but Rushdie employs them as mirrors for the "leading narrative" about Gibreel and Saladin (Frank, 107-108).

[10] Such as, for example, Jodha, the imaginary wife of the Emperor Akbar in Rushdie's novel *The Enchantress of Florence*.

magical realism in his works.[11] This thesis therefore does not divide form and content under different headings, but discusses them in their symbiosis that is typical of Rushdie's writing.

Throughout this treatise, the works of postcolonial theory are quoted and referred to, for Salman Rushdie's fiction both exemplifies and questions many key concepts of this field of cultural studies. As Rushdie himself is a prolific author of works of cultural and literary criticism, his theoretical observations are referred alongside with his fiction, namely his essay collections *Imaginary Homelands* and *Step Across This Line.* In addition, John McLeod's and Ania Loomba's introductions into postcolonialism are employed as primary sources of terms and definitions, together with the dictionary by Bill Ashcroft and his colleagues. Avtar Brah's book *Cartographies of Diaspora* is of special importance to this thesis as a background for the discussion of diaspora. As the library of the specialised Rushdie scholarship has grown very extensive, this thesis only works with some treatises out of many. Undoubtedly and regrettably, a great number of enlightening accounts is not included.

[11] As the author puts it in an interview when describing the composition of *The Satanic Verses*, "if you're going to write a novel about transformation, then the novel itself should be also metamorphic in form, so it should constantly change." John Clement Ball, "An Interview with Salman Rushdie", 1998, *The Toronto South Asian Review*; quoted in Frank, 108.

2. Identity at the beginning

> I am not myself, *he thought as a faint fluttering feeling began in the vicinity of his heart. But what does that mean, anyway, he added bitterly. After all, 'les acteurs ne sont pas des gens', as the great ham Frederick had explained in* Les Enfants du Paradis. *Masks beneath masks until suddenly the bare bloodless skull.*[12]

The interest of the novel in the problem of identity is indicated as soon as possible: by the opening quotation from Daniel Defoe's *History of the Devil*. The passage speaks about Satan as being "confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition" and as, apart from his devilish qualities, also enjoying "angelic nature".[13] Since the passage is placed at the very beginning of the novel, it inevitably affects the reading of it in some or other way. Should the reader apply the quote to one of the main characters? To both of them? To the narrator?

When one proceeds from pondering over the motto to the actual first chapter, one may be perplexed by many more questions, such as "What do I encounter here? Is it a novel or some kind of essay? Whom does the narrative voice belong to? What is his intention? What is the nature of the two characters? Are they real human beings? Are they supernatural? Should they represent some (arche)types?" Apart from Gibreel and Saladin, there is one more person present whose nature is, at the very least, controversial – the apparation Gibreel greets as Rekha Merchant. However, it is not at all sure what the phenomenon Gibreel speaks to really is: it could be a ghost of the real Rekha, a mere hallucination of Gibreel's troubled consciousness, or a devilish illusion sent in order to confuse Gibreel.

The first location of the novel is the air, where the two protagonists are floating, together with the remnants of the cracked plane and its passengers, and the traditional components of personal identity – mother tongues, loves, homes – are presented as disconnected, random debris. The two men are located in the utmost in-between: between India and England, between heaven and earth, between their past and future, between life and death. The date of the fall is not without significance either: it is, as Søren Frank observes, the New Year's Day. Similarly to the fatal midnight of *Midnight's Children*, this date is the passage between the old and the new, the in-between space where things gather speed.[14]

---

[12] *The Satanic Verses*, 34.
[13] Daniel Defoe, *The History of the Devil*, quoted in Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 2006), opening quote, page unnumbered.
[14] Frank, 156.

The initial situation of *The Satanic Verses* is an all-inclusive breakpoint and its the terminal qualities and cosmic dimensions are underlined even more by the frequent references to the Creation on the one hand and to the eschatological processes on the other. The explosion of the jumbo jet Bostan[15] is compared to the creation of the universe – "Out of thin air: a big bang, followed by falling stars, a miniature echo of the birth of time…"[16] – but the shadow of death and universal apocalypse is also present, as a blown-up airplane is an essentially catastrophic situation.[17] The images of creation and destruction mingle further on: there is, for example, "the aircraft cracked in half, a seed-pod giving up its spores, an egg yielding its mystery"[18]. The narrative voice even utters the very words and the religious connotations become unavoidable: "You think Creation happens in a rush? So then, neither does revelation..." [19] Yet the voice does not specify is what is being created here and by whom,[20] what is the subject of the revelation, who is the revelant and the revelee.

Moreover, apart from hints to the notions coming from the monotheistic denominations (angels, devils, creations and revelations), there is also "the appointed zone of their watery reincarnation"[21] and Gibreel's observation "to be born again, first you have to die", and thus other religious traditions, namely Hinduism, comes on scene as well. The heavens and hells of *The Satanic Verses* seem to be densely populated places. As Priyamvada Gopal notes, Rushdie acknowledges both Hinduism and Islam as being parts of his Indian heritage. She further suggests that in his view, migration, a crucial theme of the novel that is discussed in a separate passage, can also be seen as a "kind of reincarnation, sometimes desirable and desired, at other times bewildering and painful."[22]

Not only the beginning and end of the whole world but also two milestones of an individual's live – birth and death – are juxtaposed in the opening passage of the novel. Even though the narrative voice states that Farishta and Chamcha are "two real, full-grown, living men"[23], they are also systematically compared to newborns: "Gibreel and Saladin plummeted like bundles

[15] Bostan is also, as Saladin Chamcha informs the reader later in the novel (*The Satanic Verses*, 512), the name of one of the gardens of Paradise (the other one, Gullistan, is the name of the plane Chamcha boards on his third return to India). The idea of the "paradise lost in a fall" draws attention to one of the important intertexts of the novel – to the story of Satan's fall from the heavens.
[16] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[17] Gibreel also likens their fall to "meteor or lightning or vengeance of God." (*The Satanic Verses*, 3).
[18] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[19] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[20] The interest in Creation does not end with this remark: Charles Darwin and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck are mentioned in the first chapter and Gibreel's conversation with the zealous Creationist Eugene Dumsday broadens the reflection on the topic of "creation x evolution" even more.
[21] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[22] Priyamvada Gopal, *The Indian Novel in English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 167.
[23] *The Satanic Verses*, 3.

dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork".[24] Chamcha is also "going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal"[25], and when they reach the beach on the English shore, the narrative voice informs the reader that Saladin Chamcha "coughed, spluttered, opened his eyes, and, as befitted a new-born babe, burst into foolish tears."[26]

The novel confronts its audience with a great number of uncertainties, and not only two men, the narrative voice and the cloudy woman have unsteady identities thrust upon them, but also places, for there is "the great, rotting, beautiful, snow-white, illuminated city"[27] Gibreel and Saladin are heading to. The city, apart form these contradictory characteristics, also receives quite a few names: Mahagonny, Babylon, Alphaville. Is this the real "proper London" Gibreel is so excited about? Or a fictitious place composed of selected elements belonging to many different cities, coming both from the realm of art and from the map of the "real" world? Accordingly, the notion of Britain being the actual Britain is also problematized, for the great rotting capital is attributed to a land called Vilayet, which is how Britain is called by Urdu or Punjabi speakers,[28] and the appellation Wonderland may belong to this country as well.[29]

2.1 Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha[30]

As the narrative voice points out, "under extreme environmental pressure, characteristics were acquired"[31], or rather began to be acquired: Gibreel's and Saladin's long journey consisting of many mental and physical transformations starts here and ends five hundred and fifty pages later, with them both having identities that are substantially different. In the conclusive passage of this work, some suggestions concerning the nature of these identities will be made: whether they are more pure or more miscellaneous, more whole or more fragmented.

This transformative trip consisting of many steps across many lines is not undertaken voluntarily and knowingly at the beginning: the two actors "did not become aware of the moment at which the process of their transformation began"[32]. The quest for new identities thus seems to be imposed on Saladin and Gibreel, and the multiple changes in their

[24] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[25] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[26] *The Satanic Verses*, 10.
[27] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[28] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996) 8.
[29] This proliferation of names suggests that there is not only one "proper" Britain, but that there are many Britains occupying the same island.
[30] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[31] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[32] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.

personalities that follow are presented as initiated by the forces from the outside. Gopal also points out that in *The Satanic Verses*, "it [migration] is not a process the migrant is always in control of and transformations are far from seamless."[33] The fact that the transformation of identity is something instigated by external elements leads one to questions about the extent of control the two men have over their own fates. Is anything like freedom of will and choice possible in the world of the novel, or are the characters just puppets manipulated by an unknown (or perhaps even known) higher power?[34]

In the first chapter, Saladin and Gibreel have distinct features of their own, and these characteristics are juxtaposed and contrasted. The manner of their speech, their appearance, their reaction to the unusual situation they find themselves in differ in a substantial way, and a kind of binary opposition is established between them. Saladin is presented as a reserved, buttoned-up (both metaphorically in his manners and physically in his grey suit accompanied by a bower hat) who falls in a straight way and without sportive embellishments, while Gibreel, wearing a purple bush shirt, is "cavorting", "swimming in the air" and "adopting heraldic postures". Moreover, the way they speak and their vocabulary distinguish them as promptly as their attires: Gibreel's utterances are flowing with informal expressions and nicknames, it is all slang and Hindi words; whereas Saladin uses a very high register of English, at this point without any obvious traces of his mother tongue. The songs they try to battle each other with could not be more dissimilar: Gibreel trills a plain, essentially multicultural tune about "Japanese shoes, Russian hats and inviolately subcontinental hearts",[35] and he translates it into English ad hoc, while Saladin chants one of the musical pillars of the British Empire, the 18th century patriotic evergreen "Rule, Britannia!" and his lips conveniently acquire the Union Jack colours under the influence of cold.

Not surprisingly, Gibreel and Saladin do not agree with one another as far as the nature of their fall and rescue is concerned: "Gibreel never repudiated the miracle; unlike Chamcha, who tried to reason it out of existence".[36] The narrator describes their fall as "angelicdevilish", and the first chapter is very much preoccupied with the affairs of heaven and hell. They are at the first sight clearly polarized according to these two locations: Saladin's first sentence contains the adjective "infernal" and a curse "to the devil with your

[33] Gopal, 167.
[34] Later on, the narrative voice informs the reader that "higher powers have taken an interest" and adds that "I am, of course, speaking of myself." (*The Satanic Verses*, 133)
[35] *The Satanic Verses*, 6.
[36] *The Satanic Verses*, 9.

tunes"[37], later he also asks "What the hell?"[38], and Gibreel is the one who flaps with his hands as if they were wings. However, it is Gibreel who is being recommended by Rekha Merchant to the care of the eternal flames, as she accuses him of sending her to hell.[39]

Saladin Chamcha, Gibreel Farishta: the name is understood as one of the crucial elements constituting one's identity and the names of the two were not picked up at random.[40] The names establish a continuously changing tension between their meaning and the personalities of their owners. It is also no accident that both of them have changed their names at some point – Gibreel Saladin used to be Ismail Najmuddin and Saladin Chamcha is a would-be smart version of Salahuddin Chamchawala. Name-changing is a popular activity in the novel in general. As D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke points out, there are many instances of willing re-naming in *The Satanic Verses*: Otto Cone used to be Otto Cohen and his daughters were once called Yelyena and Alleluia, the black-leader Uhuru Simba was baptised Sylvester Roberts.[41] The reasons for these innovations are diverse and very interesting for the discussion of identity: some people change their names as they want to get rid of their past and start anew (Saladin, Otto), some choose such names that would indicate a return to their "original identity" (the African-sounding battle name Uhuru Simba).

One of the first associations that come with the name "Saladin" is the figure of the foremost Muslim leader of the 12th century who defeated the Crusaders, recaptured Jerusalem and was also devoted to the idea of moral regeneration of Islam through the spread of jihad, Muslim religious institutions and learning.[42] Furthermore, there is also "Aladdin" concealed in Saladin. Since one of the chapters of *The Satanic Verses* is entitled "A Wonderful Lamp", a flying carpet appears very soon and Saladin has always wanted to have his father's copper lamp in order to rub it and see what comes out of it, this association is perhaps not at all fruitless. Saladin's surname, "Chamcha", is a word of Hindi origin that in its literal meaning

[37] *The Satanic Verses*, 3.
[38] *The Satanic Verses*, 7.
[39] *The Satanic Verses*, 8.
[40] The names are a great issue in the novel in general: as Søren Frank notes, the echoing names of the characters (Hind: Hind Sufyan, Hind the Grandee's wife; Ayesha: Mahound's favourite wife, the Empress Imam fights against, the butterfly girl-seer; Imam's and Mahound's followers, etc.) connect their bearers and thereby their stories together and help to establish the multiple tensions and parallels of *The Satanic Verses* (Frank, 149). The name of the Persian scrivener – Salman – is also not accidental and implies interesting questions concerning authorship, the reliability of the author and also the connection between the author and the book (in this case, Rushdie was unwittingly foreseeing his own fate).
[41] D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 81-82.
[42] "Saladin." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 07 Jul. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518809/Saladin>.

signifies a spoon[43] (hence Gibreel's nickname "Spoono" for Saladin) but is used as a slang expression for a "toady".[44] The two parts of Saladin's name thus create a striking opposition: the famous "defender of the faith" meets with the fairy-tale figure of a poor boy who finally gets a kingdom by virtue of magic, with a derogatory word for a sycophant and with a mere piece of cutlery. This strange mixture of characteristics seems to be rather appropriate for Saladin who is described as having a "pathetic personality, that half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices."[45]

As for Gibreel, the archangelic implications of his first name are clear enough: Gabriel is the archangel connected with Annunciation (to Virgin Mary) and Revelation (to Daniel, Muhammad).[46] In addition, Gibreel's surname Farishta means "angel" in Urdu.[47] There is no contradiction hidden in his name – does it mean that Gibreel is an unequivocally angelic person, as his name suggests? As soon as in the second chapter one learns that "Gibreel's exhalations, those ochre clouds of sulphur and brimstone, had given him – when taken together with his pronounced widow's peak and crowblack hair – an air more saturnine than haloed, in spite of his archangelic name."[48] The relation of the name and its implications to the character of the name's bearer are perhaps not as straightforward as is may seem.

Saladin and Gibreel are dissimilar in many respects, but their supposed difference and contrariness is questioned since the very beginning, as the above quoted conglutinate "Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha" indicates. This suggestion is deepened later on when Saladin feels as if "he were growing into the person whose head nestled now between his legs and whose legs were wrapped around his long, patrician neck".[49] At this moment, the fight merges with embrace and Saladin and Gibreel may seem to the reader as two sides of one coin, as a head and a tail. The seemingly clear initial opposition between them is disrupted by this embrace that can be metaphorically read as a kind of "marriage of heaven and hell".[50]

The two men undergo a terminal experience, but even though Gibreel celebrates their falls as a death of their previous selves and the birth of their new identities, the rest of the novel

---

[43] "Chamcha", *Urban Dictionary*, 13 November 2007, 6 July 2011 http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chamcha.
[44] "Chamcha", *Urban Dictionary*, 13 November 2007, 6 July 2011 http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chamcha.
[45] *The Satanic Verses*, 9.
[46] "Gabriel." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 07 Jul. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/223206/Gabriel>.
[47] Margaret Reynolds and Jonathan Noakes, *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide* (London: Vintage, 2003) 117.
[48] *The Satanic Verses*, 13.
[49] *The Satanic Verses*, 7.
[50] Rushdie acknowledges William Blake's vision as one of the vital influences for *The Satanic Verses* ("In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 403).

indicates that the fall did "only" reveal things that were hidden or kept hidden before. If there is any newness in *The Satanic Verses*, it is only the hybrid newness the narrative voice asks about: "How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what confusions, translations, conjoinings is it made?"[51] This thesis will try to follow Saladin and Gibreel on their ways and, in the end, to discuss of what confusions, translations and conjoinings are they made when the novel leaves them.

2.2 Attitudes to Identity

Identity is a theme on which long miles of pages have been written and it is a vital point of interest in many disciplines, but it is neither the interest nor the possibility of this thesis to explore theories of identity and the numerous possible approaches to it in an exhaustive manner. In this passage, some of the possible attitudes to identity will be presented, connected to *The Satanic Verses* and exemplified, if possible, on the characters of the novel.

As the brief encounter with the introductory passage of *The Satanic Verses* have shown, identity is by no means perceived as something monolithic, stable and fixed here. Peter Jones points out that "in the world that Rushdie portrays in *The Satanic Verses*, where people move amongst and interact with others who are significantly different from themselves, people will be much more sensitized to identity than if they encounter only their own kind."[52] He further observes that in the globalized world Rushdie writes about, "it has become increasingly difficult for people to remain unapprised of the distinctness of their identities,"[53] and this exploration of uncertain, exposed identities is frequently connected to the migrant condition in Rushdie's writing. As Søren Frank notes, Rushdie's novels are political and collective, so the individual identity can never be separated from the macrocosmic forces or machineries as History, Nation and Religion. For Rushdie, the human psyche is not "an isolated island in the world's ocean".[54]

The conception of identity as a process is also adopted by many theoreticians and writers from the countries with the history of colonialism. However, it is not the only possible attitude, and it is also not the only attitude introduced in the novel. Some identities are also presented as totalizing and stable, and these are inevitably connected to some notion of a higher order of the world: they imply the existence of a "grand récit",[55] an all-encompassing explanatory

[51] *The Satanic Verses*, 8.
[52] Jones, 325.
[53] Jones, 325.
[54] Frank, 108.
[55] Jean Lyotard, *O Postmodernismu*, translated by J.Pechar (Praha: Filosofický ústav AV, 1993).

frame they can relate themselves to. Identities can be perceived as moving or stable, chosen willingly or given involuntarily, constructed from the inside or forced upon from the outside. In *The Satanic Verses*, these categories can never be separated completely, as the examples of Saladin and Gibreel show in a persuasive way. They contribute to the parade of duality and opposition in the novel. As Reynolds and Noakes point out, "dualities pattern Rushdie's literary vision … It is almost as though he cannot have one idea without immediately considering its opposite."[56] This division to "stable" identities and "moving" identities should be therefore understood as the indication of two possible directions, not as two impenetrable pigeonholes.

2.2.1 Stable identities

In some attitudes, identity is perceived as given and determined from the outside, and the approach to it is more fatalistic. This concept of identity has been seriously challenged in the recent decades: history knows many cases of religious conversion, emigration or cultural transplantation, but it seems that never before was identity perceived and treated as something so changeable, selectable and eclectic. Many institutions connected to the formation of one's identity, such as religion, nationality or ethnicity, were based on unifying tendencies and their purpose was stability, unity and elimination of abnormalities. The possibilities to confront the keystones of one's identity with completely different models were not as commonplace as they are nowadays due to the mass media and the cultural diversity of the global melting pot.

India, one of the locations and also themes of *The Satanic Verses,* is often presented as multiple by definition, as Rushdie puts it, it is characterized by "too-muchness"[57] of everything. Nonetheless, even this country Zeenat Vakil praises for "an ethic of historically validated eclecticism", claiming the entire national culture was based on "the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit"[58] is split by the conflicts of identity, also due to the results of British colonial rule. The Indian politics is not as prominent a topic in *The Satanic Verses* as it is in *Midnight's Children*, but the tensions between different religious and ethnic groups are also mentioned several times. Similarly, Britain has to face an unprecedented challenge to its self-conception because of the wave of immigrants from the ex-colonies. There is no doubt about the fact that colonialism has particular effects on the individual identities of the people and also on the demarcation of national, cultural, ethnic or religious

[56] *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 7.
[57] *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 12.
[58] *The Satanic Verses*, 52.

boundaries. Gopal suggests that the two protagonists of *The Satanic Verses* "can be figured as representing divisions within the postcolonial Anglophone Indian self: the self-hating Anglophile Saladin Chamcha … and the celebrated film icon, Gibreel Farishta … , who sings of his heart that will always remain Indian."[59]

As John McLeod points out, manipulation and construction of identity has played a crucial role in all colonial pursuits. Colonialism does not involve economic strategies or military control only, it also "suggests certain ways of seeing, specific modes of understanding the world and one's place in it".[60] One of the conditions of a successful colonization of a people is the ability of the colonizers to ascribe identities to the colonized. In this situation, as McLeod explains, "identity is defined in negative terms by those in a position of power" and one is denied the right to define one's own identity as a subject. Identity is something other people make for one and in "so doing they commit a violence that splits his very sense of self."[61] These imposed identities should appear as something self-evident, unquestionable and fixed, and the division of humankind into the superior, civilised colonizers and the inferior, savage colonized is presented as the natural organization of the world. McLeod points out that ideology assigns one a role and identity and one is made to recognize it as his or her own.[62] With reference to Frantz Fanon, he further observes that the colonized people are "deemed to epitomise everything that the colonising French [British, …] are not"[63] – this tendency is exemplified in *The Satanic Verses* by Saladin's transformation into a horned, sulphur-breathing devil / goat, and by the other mutant inhabitants of the Detention Centre. According to McLeod, there are several ways of responding to the trauma of being forced to believe in one's own cultural inferiority. One of them is an attempt to accept the ideals of the "civilised" colonial power. This strategy is not efficient, for, as McLeod sums it, "however hard the colonised try to accept the education, values and language of France [or another colonial power] …, they are never accepted on equal terms."[64] *The Satanic Verses* provides a telling example of this attempt to solve the humiliation of being colonized by embracing the values and culture of the colonizers: Saladin Chamcha tries to be more British than the Britons themselves, but he is, for all his tweed suits and polished accent, never accepted as their equal. He is only allowed to dub characters on TV and can never appear on screen.

[59] Gopal, 166.
[60] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 18.
[61] McLeod, 20.
[62] McLeod, 37-38.
[63] McLeod, 20-21.
[64] McLeod, 21.

These identities that the colonial institutions strive to impose on people they want to dominate should be as homogeneous and stable as possible, in order to support the categories into which colonialism divides the reality. Nonetheless, they are not fully successful in this attempt, for they get caught in the inescapable trap of ambivalence. Homi Bhabha and other critics have emphasised what Ania Loomba sums up as "the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities".[65] John McLeod explains Bhabha's sophisticated concept of "ambivalence" in this way: colonialism is based on a series of assumptions that attempt to justify its view of other lands and people. This crucial aim, i.e. to represent the colonized people in various derogatory ways, is never completely achieved. The colonial discourses do not work according to plan because they are "always pulling in two contrary directions at once."[66] The colonized person should be at the same time the embodiment of all the things the colonizers are not, their "the other", and the object of Western knowledge that can be easily domesticated and thoroughly explained by the colonizers' analysis.[67] The fatal difficulty of colonial discourses according to Bhabha is, as John McLeod puts it, that the construction of otherness is "split by the contradictory positioning of the colonized simultaneously inside and outside Western knowledge".[68] This fallacy Homi Bhabha reveals at the core of colonial discourses points out that the division of identities to "moving" and "stable" is not rigid – the forced, supposedly unambiguous identities bring with them elements of ambivalence and instability, whereas the moving identities also need some kind of a midpoint, if they are to last.

Not only forced identities are desired to be as compact and stable as possible: also those identities that are accepted and chosen willingly are valued for their constancy and "indigenous" features. Some of the responses to the colonial discourses work with the notion of coming back to the original, primary identity of the people with a history of colonialism, and the recovery of these identities should heal the results of colonialism in the minds and self-perception of the individuals and also in the consciousness of the community. These willingly chosen, purposefully formed and encouraged identities require stability and unity, and they work with such notions as roots or shared heritage. When, for example, new nations were formed after the fall of colonial regimes (such as when new nations were formed any time anywhere, as for example Benedict Anderson has shown in his *Imagined*

[65] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005) 91-92.
[66] McLeod, 52.
[67] McLeod, 52.
[68] McLeod, 53.

Communities),[69] this process required the promotion of unifying elements and suppression of differences.

Another example of a voluntarily demarcated and encouraged identity can be the concept of Négritude, articulated mainly in the works of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor. One of its aims was to "unite people living in different nations through their shared ancestry and common origins."[70] Négritude, in contrast to the shifting identities that will be discussed in a moment, attempted at promoting and re-evaluating the given identity of being black. Its aim was not to melt all ethnical or cultural categories away but to stress the uniqueness of the black experience: they represented, in McLeod's words, "being black as extremely valuable."[71] As Ania Loomba notes, for Senghor, "racial difference and consciousness were part of human reality, moulded historically, and yet reflecting an inner state that is not just a passing phase of history."[72] In this account, "Blackness" was not an arbitrary label, but a given fact, not a point of cultural negotiations, but an inevitable reality.

This method of forming a sense of belonging and manufacturing an individual identity closely knitted to the identity of a group is productive not only for nations, but also for religious communities. *The Satanic Verses* offers an imaginary, but imaginative view of the creation of the religion called Submission.[73] The first followers of Mahound[74] are depicted as a rather heterogeneous group – in social, intellectual and also ethnical respect – yet the new Submissive identity quickly replaces their previous self-conceptions. The leaders of the new religion also strive for unity; they try to eliminate divergences and all the alternative versions of the founding myth that could possibly threaten the viability of Submission.

The strife for being pure, absolute and unanimous also marks the story of Ayesha the seer, of the Imam or, in some parts of the novel, of Gibreel Farishta. At the top of his archangelic zest, Gibreel decides to repudiate all his previous doubts: "No more of these England-induced ambiguities, these Biblical-Satanic confusions! – Clarity, clarity, at all costs clarity! – This Shaitan was no fallen angel. – Forget those son-of-the-morning fictions; this was no good boy

[69] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).
[70] McLeod, 77.
[71] McLeod, 77.
[72] Loomba, 177.
[73] This "Submission" both is and is not Islam ("In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 409). What is arguably the main point of this account is not blasphemy, but a comment on the way in which a new religious identity is formed, by which means and under what circumstances.
[74] This form of the Prophet's name is preserved in the thesis when referring to the character of the novel, as Rushdie's argument is to reclaim the language from one's opponents ("In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 402) and "to turn insults into strengths, whighs, tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym: Mahound."(*The Satanic Verses*, 93).

gone bad, but pure evil."[75] Although Gibreel's try at clarity at all costs proves to be a failure, the novel does not present all such attempts as fiascos. All the survivors of the pilgrimage to Mecca through the Arabian Sea that was presented as a for-the-pure-only matter by Ayesha agree that they saw the sea parting, the villagers going through it and the fish dying on the dry land.

2.2.2 Moving identities

In some important works of recent cultural criticism, the very possibility of an identity being totally stable is dismissed as an unreal notion. Avtar Brah, for instance, mentions Norman Tebbit's infamous idea of the "cricket test"[76] as a "restricted vision of Britishness" and claims it is "seriously interrogated by all kinds of old and new diasporic identities in Britain. These identity formations challenge the idea of a continuous, unchanging, homogeneous and stable British identity; instead, they highlight the point that identity is always plural and in process, even when it might be construed or represented as fixed."[77] Even though there are some examples of would-be fixed and stable identities in *The Satanic Verses* and in other works by Rushdie as well, it may be argued that his main interest lies with those identities that resemble a patchwork quilt or a collage. As Reynolds and Noakes observe, "his way of considering and analysing identity means that Rushdie recognizes that that is what you do to 'create' a sense of who you are. His characters are never stable, monumentally integrated and consistent."[78] One does not even have to go as far as to the critics, for Rushdie himself states that

> *The Satanic Verses* celebrate hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. … *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to out mongrel selves.[79]

Rushdie seems to have been cultivating a long-term interest in self-made men and women, in people who decided to become someone or something and they did it. In *The Satanic Verses*,

[75] *The Satanic Verses*, 353.
[76] The idea that the crucible of the immigrant's loyalty to the "new homeland" he or she has come to should be a cricket match: if he or she would support the British team against the representatives of the country of his or her origin, then the person is "really" British.
[77] Brah, 193.
[78] *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 6.
[79] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 394.

this theme of self-creation becomes prominent. The novel offers manifold examples of more or less successfully and efficiently created identities, and it presents various methods and elements that may be employed in this creation. Rushdie comments upon the process of identity construction in his essay "Imaginary Homelands", but his remark can be instantly applied to the characters of *The Satanic Verses*, who are

> Partial beings, in all the sense of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because of our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death.[80]

Both heroes of *The Satanic Verses* are on a quest of identity. The conditions of their lives, be it family, love, culture, language or religion, have never been much stable and homogeneous. Peter Jones describes their identities as "shifting", "mixed", "crisis-ridden" and "uncertain".[81] They are indeed partial beings and the book may be read as a chronicle of their attempt to compose and balance all these diverse elements they are made of.

Rushdie's interest in constructed identities and imaginary self-conceptions is frequently related to mass culture, entertainment and famous personalities in general,[82] as if the fame pushed the issue of identity even further. Famous people in Rushdie's books seem to invent at least one more identity, a public persona, a mask, and in addition to this split between their private and public selves, there is also the identity that is being imposed on the celebrities by the public who project their own desires or fears into them. When Gibreel's career in the popular movies called "theologicals" is described, the thin boundary between the actor and the thing he represents for the audience is articulated:

> For over a decade and a half he had represented, to hundreds of millions of believers in that country in which, to this day, the human population outnumbers the divine by less than three to one, the most acceptable, and instantly recognizable, face of the Supreme.

[80] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992) 12.
[81] Jones, 326.
[82] Apart from Gibreel and Saladin, this is also true for Vina Apsara (*The Ground beneath Her Feet*), Brass Monkey / Jamila (*Midnight's Children*) and many more.

> For many of his fans, the boundary separating the performer and his roles had long ago ceased to exist.[83]

It is therefore is no accident that Gibreel and Saladin are both actors. The acting profession with its use of masks, both physical and mental, may be read as another metaphor of the complex issue of becoming somebody, of creating, abandoning or borrowing an identity. Actors are required to be of a slightly metamorphic nature; they are paid and admired for their abilities of transformation and for their command of the art of becoming someone else. The shared profession of Saladin and Gibreel also establishes another opposition of the novel, the relation of visibility and invisibility.[84] As Rushdie explains, "here are these two actors in *The Satanic Verses,* one of whom was ultra-visible and the other one was invisible. One is the most famous face in the country, and the other is the most famous voice. So they were in a way opposite kinds of actor – the visible and the invisible."[85]

The issue of being famous, of masks and fame in *The Satanic Verses* s not restricted to the two actors only, it is carefully dispersed over the whole novel: Alleluia Cone, the pale mountaineer, gets involved in the celebrity industry after her ascension from the Everest; Hind Simbel and Mahound are forced to act and put on masks if they want to get hold of the public; and the weight of stardom and the demand to fulfil people's wishes also affects Ayesha, the butterfly-clad leader of the lost village.

Gibreel and Saladin represent two alternative ways of inventing oneself out of many. Gibreel is depicted as a real master of metamorphosis, as a possessor of moving identity, partly because of his career of the film star portraying numerous roles. His profession is recognized as one of possible sources of his indefinite personality, but the crack in Gibreel's self seems to go deeper than to an actor's tendency to keep changing roles even in the real life. It is mainly concerned with his religion. He painfully loses his faith in God to emptiness at the beginning of the novel. When God does not seem to be responding to Gibreel's prayers during his mysterious bleeding illness, he ceases to believe in him and commits a deliberate act of blasphemy by eating huge amount of pork by consequence. The novel presents his desperate but to a failure doomed attempt to restore his love for God or to replace it by another, as much powerful a force – human love.

---

[83] *The Satanic Verses*, 16-17.

[84] Visiblity and invisibility are important qualities in *The Satanic Verses*: there are places that are visible but unseen (such as the London as experienced by the immigrants Saladin is suddenly forced to see) and also invisible people, the illegal tenants of the Shaandaar Café.

[85] *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 31.

Gibreel Farishta had been born, as has already been mentioned, Ismail Najmuddin.[86] He comes from a Muslim background and he is said to have been convinced of the existence of a supernatural world since he was a child. Although he has taken the existence of many things between heaven and earth for granted, he has not been a zealous practitioner of any specific religion: "mostly, however, his religious faith was a low-key thing, a part of him that required no more special attention than any other".[87] He's been also influenced by other spiritual traditions than Islam, thanks to his foster father Babashed Mhatre who used to talk to him about migration of souls and thus "started Farishta off on the whole reincarnation business"[88], but who was also a devoted amateur spiritist. When the acting in Hindu theological movies is added, Gibreel's religious portfolio is colourful enough. Gibreel's education has also been rather diverse and eclectic: out of his initial lack of love affairs, he "studied, becoming an omnivorous autodidact, devouring the metamorphic myths of Greece and Rome, … the theosophy of Annie Besant, and unified field theory, and the incident of the Satanic Verses in the early career of the Prophet, … and the surrealism of the newspapers."[89]

Gibreel is a shining example of the American dream story, only transplanted to India, or, to use Rekha Merchant's less kindly way of putting it, he is a "jumped-up type from the gutter"[90]: a poor boy born loses his parents, but, due to his hard work and many strokes of good luck, he becomes a rich and admired actor. The actors, "stars", occupy the celestial space that used to be reserved for divinities in the past, and Gibreel's dream angelhood fits pretty well in this cultural role of the celebrity. For all his stardom, Gibreel is not unconditionally angelic. He is portrayed as someone who bears both divine and devilish attributes: "And yet, in spite of profanity and debilitation, this was a face inextricably mixed up with holiness, perfection, grace: God stuff."[91] The question the narrative voice poses in Chapter 1 ("Of what type – angelic, satanic – was Farishta's song?"[92]) can be asked not only about Gibreel's tunes, but also about Gibreel himself. The reactions of other people to Gibreel are also quite disparate: Rekha Merchant sends him to hell, but there is also his mother who considers him an angel. Both visions come into being during the course of the book, even though in a different manner than the ladies would probably have expected. Gibreel gets a real

[86] "Ismail, after the child involved in the sacrifice of Ibrahim, and Najmuddin, star of the faith; he'd given up quite a name when he took the angel's." (*The Satanic Verses*, 17).
[87] *The Satanic Verses*, 22.
[88] *The Satanic Verses*, 21.
[89] *The Satanic Verses*, 23-24.
[90] *The Satanic Verses*, 26.
[91] *The Satanic Verses*, 17.
[92] *The Satanic Verses*, 10.

halo above his head, he speaks to Mahound as the Archangel Gibreel in his dreams, and later he walks the streets of London as the Angel of death, Azraeel. He also goes to "hell" – be it the hell of his jealousy inspired by the little satanic verses written by Saladin, or the hell of madness and premature death.[93]

When Saladin Chamcha is being described more thoroughly for the first time in the novel, the reader learns that he was "watching the city of his birth fall away from him like old snakeskin"[94] and after getting the details of his handsome face, he is informed that Saladin "had constructed this face with care – it had taken several years to get it just right … indeed, he had forgotten how he looked like before it. Furthermore, he has shaped himself a voice to go with the face …"[95] It is thereby clear that Saladin has achieved his identity in a different way than Gibreel, although it proves similarly unstable and it holds contradictory elements as well: while Gibreel's personality is haphazard and things are rather happening to him, Saladin Chamcha construct himself deliberately and purposefully; he wants to be in command of his life and of his own self.

At a closer look, Saladin becomes startlingly similar to the glass man who visits him in the dream on his flight to India. The man, covered in glass from head to toe, seeks for a release out of his glass shell. Saladin has also tried to release himself from the prison of his skin, but, as the glass man, when he starts to break the glass of his past, suddenly blood spurts out and pieces of his flesh go with the shards of the glass. His perfect mask does not survive his visit to Bombay – he unwillingly and unwittingly slips into Bombay lilt on the plane, and he may only ask "How had the past bubbled up, in transmogrified vowels and vocab?"[96]

Saladin is split between the Received Pronunciation and Indian English accent, between Bombay and Proper London, between the past that was given to him and the future he has invented for himself. He has been enchanted by England and all English[97] since he was a boy, and he preferred the "fabled country of Vilayet across the black water and far away"[98] to his

[93] Gibreel's mental illness, schizophrenia, is another piece to the mosaic of various views on identity the novel puts together. Even though it is only Gibreel who receives the medical diagnosis and whose inner split manifests itself most violently, schizophrenic characteristics may be found elsewhere in the novel: as Søren Frank points out, schizophrenia characterizes the narrative strategies of *The Satanic Verses*. Frank observes that, for example, the borders between the individual story lines are not distinct but that the stories melt into each other, and that the narrator either wants to present him/herself as schizophrenic, or really is so (Frank, 108-110, 159).

[94] *The Satanic Verses*, 33.

[95] *The Satanic Verses*, 33.

[96] *The Satanic Verses*, 34.

[97] When talking about Saladin's cultural affiliations, the words "British" and "English" are used as synonyms because there is a sign of equation between "Britain" and "England" for Saladin.

[98] *The Satanic Verses*, 35.

too real, dirty, noisy and too-much-of-everything homeland. As Angela Carter points out in her review of *The Satanic Verses*,

> Seduced at an early age by the imperial promise of those magic syllables, Ellowen Deeowen, he went to great lengths to tailor himself to fit his adopted city, paring down his hilariously unwieldy name to Saladin Chamcha, only to find the slimline version makes him a laughing stock - chamcha means 'toady' - when he returned to his native Bombay.[99]

As Gibreel was influenced by his mother's delight in him, the relationship to his father proves decisive for Saladin, and mainly in the negative way: "… the son became convinced that his father would smother all his hopes unless he got away, and from that moment he became desperate to leave, to escape, to place oceans between the great man and himself."[100] Gibreel's mother considered her son an angel, Saladin is accused of being a "demon up from hell"[101] by his father. Changez Chamchawala tries to make a man of Saladin (who keeps asking bitterly "But what man? The fathers never know."[102]), but the humiliation he brings on Saladin by this effort during his first two weeks in London will inevitably damage their relationship fatally. The memories of these days will

> … boil away his [Saladin's] childhood fatherworship, and make him a secular man, who would do his best, thereafter, to live without a god of any type; which would fuel, perhaps, his determination to become the thing his father was-not-could-never-be, that is, a goodandproper Englishman.[103]

He decides to conquer his "imaginary homeland" at all costs, and he begins to invent himself anew. When he starts to go to school in England, he starts "to act, to find masks that these fellows would recognize, paleface masks, clown-masks, until he fooled them away into thinking he was okay, he was people-like-us."[104] Finally, his marriage to an Englishwoman, Pamela, is the supposed confirmation of his conquest of Britain. In Rushdie's own words, "A

[99] Angela Carter, "Angels in Dirty Places: Review of *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie", *The Guardian*, Friday 23 September 1988, 4 July 2011 http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/1988/sep/23/fiction.angelacarter Friday 23 September 1988.
[100] *The Satanic Verses*, 36-37.
[101] *The Satanic Verses*, 45.
[102] *The Satanic Verses*, 43.
[103] *The Satanic Verses*, 43.
[104] *The Satanic Verses*, 43.

man who invents himself needs someone to believe in him, to prove he's managed it."[105] Saladin's story supports this argument about love being decisive for a self-inventing human being.

However, his "roots"[106] in India do not give up easily, as the rest of the novel shows; and the strife between India and England inside Saladin is marked by his relationships to two women, his wife Pamela and his childhood friend Zeenat. When he cheats on Pamela with Zeenat, he does not only feel the usual guilt, but the experience of being unfaithful to his English wife with an Indian friend seems to be a crack in his conception of life as such, it is as if "his right eye saw the world moving to the left while his left eye saw it sliding to the right."[107] Moreover, Zeenat has a project of reclaiming Chamcha back for India, and even though Saladin, a few whiles before the fatal fall from Bostan, curses India and promises to never get caught by his past again ("Damn you, India, … To hell with you, I escaped you clutches long ago, you won't get your hooks into me again, you cannot drag me back."[108]), he can by no means guess how he himself and his relationship to everything and everyone will evolve under the pressure of unexpected and unexpectable circumstances that are yet to come, and neither can Gibreel.

[105] *The Satanic Verses*, 49.
[106] This time, the term "roots" may not be out of place, even though there are certainly no "gnarled growths sprouting through the soles" (*Shame*, 87) when Saladin looks under his feet, but there is the walnut tree in his father's garden, where Saladin's soul is supposed to be resting while his body is away (and possessed by the devil).
[107] *The Satanic Verses*, 51.
[108] *The Satanic Verses*, 35.

3. Space

> *Gibreel feels himself rising into the sky, bearing the old man of the sea, the Imam with hair that grows longer by the minute, streaming in every direction, his eyebrows like pennants in the wind. Jerusalem, he wonders, which way is that? – And then, it's a slippery word, Jerusalem, it can be an idea as well as a place: a goal, exaltation. Where is the Imam's Jerusalem?*[109]

The Satanic Verses stretches not only across centuries, but also across continents, and the novel is more expansive than other works by Rushdie, as D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke notes: "Whereas *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* focus on the modern nation-space designated 'India' and 'Pakistan', respectively, *The Satanic Verses* is transnational …"[110] The map of *The Satanic Verses*, if there was such a thing to be drawn, would require special cartographic symbols, for it would have to include not only "real" places such as India, Argentina and Britain, but also other, less conventional but no less important locations, such as the air, the past or the dreamscape. This spatial design is closely knitted to the topics of the novel, for crossing boundaries, leaving homes and embarking on pilgrimages of all kinds cannot by definition take place in one space only, and all these activities tend to have a great impact on people's identities. As Catherine Cundy observes, "the specific topography of *The Satanic Verses* also suggests a greater commitment on Rushdie's part to his arguments about migration"[111], and his unceasing interest in what Cundy calls "the relationships between location and dislocation"[112] becomes even more prominent in this novel. A human destiny gets shaped by places one wants to leave or discover, possess or get disposed. The manner in which one comes to a place is also crucial – whether the place was chosen deliberately, picked-up randomly or forced upon one. The influence is mutual, as places are formed by people who give them names, invent them by demarcating them from the rest of the world, or attempt to alter them according to their will. The importance of space in *The Satanic Verses* may be spotted at first glance at the index of chapters: half of the chapters bear headings indicating either a movement or a location ("Ellowen Deeowen", "A City Visible but Unseen", "Return to Jahilia",[113] "The Parting of the Arabian Sea").

---

[109] *The Satanic Verses*, 212.
[110] Goonetilleke, 74.
[111] Cundy, 69.
[112] Cundy, 66.
[113] "Jahiliyah" is primarily a term of the history of Islam, denoting the period preceding the revelation to Muhammad, meaning "ignorance" or "barbarism" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 19 August 2001,

Rushdie's interest in places, in the way they shape people, and in the movements people perform between them is not the matter of *The Satanic Verses* only.[114] The changes of location are crucial for him not only in terms of plots or the development of the characters but also, as Reynolds and Noakes point out, in relation to his literary language:

> There are two terms that are often mentioned in relation to Rushdie: "translation" and "metaphor", and they each mean the same thing, a "carrying across" … This goes for Rushdie's subjects, too, where there is always a sense of movement, a "carrying across" of one idea from place to place. Migration, for instance, is one of his key themes, and that measures "home" against "exile" or displacement of whatever kind, including voluntary displacement.[115]

Not only living individuals perform border-crossing in the novel: there are words travelling across languages, images roving from culture to culture, stories wandering throughout centuries. *The Satanic Verses* is, apart from other things, an account of transgressions, of "awaycomings" and homecomings. Before the concrete locations and movements of the novel will be explored, three inherent and mutually implying concepts of migration, borders or diaspora are introduced, as these words are likely to recur many times on the following pages. Further reflections on the importance of space in *The Satanic Verses* will be divided into three main parts: Locations, Movements and Spaces.

3.2 Borders

Avtar Brah introduces the notion of the borders in this way: "Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others …"[116] She calls them "arbitrary constructions", and in this sense, she adds, "they are always metaphors. But, far from being mere abstractions of concrete reality … they can serve as powerful inscriptions of the effects of political borders."[117] Even though boundaries and borders are usually understood as places where something stops or ends, Homi Bhabha points out that "as the Greeks recognized, the

---

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/299419/jahiliyah), so the heading may be also read as a "return to ignorance". However, in *The Satanic Verses*, Jahilia is firstly a city where the story of Mahound and his religion of "Submission" takes place. The implications of the name of the city are discussed later on.

[114] The issue of migration, for example, plays an important role in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* or in *The Moor's Last Sigh.*

[115] *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 6.

[116] Brah, 198.

[117] Brah, 198.

boundary is that from which something begins its presencing."[118] These observations are very close to Rushdie's own view of borders, for he frequently sets out to explore their randomness and, at the same time, he draws attention to their fortuity or intentionality. Who are the authors of the borders? Are not some of the borders that are presented as immovable and natural preserved to somebody's convenience? Who sets the dividing line between the British and the non-British, for example? These questions recur in Rushdie's writing and, for example, the arbitrariness and political utility of the artificial and bloody division of India into two states is also a great issue for him. *The Satanic Verses* challenge the position and function of many borders that have been taken for granted: where the line dividing good and evil lies, what separates fiction and reality, how to demarcate dream and the real life, where the past ends and the where present begins, and how can we tell God from the Devil.

In Rushdie's opinions, the overcoming of borders lays at the core of all humanity, "in our deepest natures, we are frontier-crossing beings"[119], and *The Satanic Verses* represents a powerful illustration of this belief. In the novel, characteristics are acquired or lost not only "under extreme environmental pressure"[120], but also and mainly while crossing borders of every imaginable kind. Rushdie calls the frontier a "wake-up call" and he stresses the importance of the frontier in the process of getting to know oneself and the world:

> At the frontier we can't avoid the truth; the comforting layers of the quotidian, which insulate us against the world's harsher realities, are stripped away, and, wide-eyed in the harsh fluorescent light of the frontier's windowless halls, we see things as they are.[121]

Gibreel's and Saladin's metamorphoses begin when they are crossing many borders at one time: between the sky and the land, between India and Britain, between the old and the new year. Alleluia Cone climbed the Everest and thus overcame not only the common limits of physical and mental strength, but also, in her opinion, the line dividing heaven and earth. She returned from the expedition with a substantially different view of life and herself. Rosa Diamond who left Britain and arrived to Argentina had to solve fundamental existential dilemmas under the pressure of the move: "… of what was she capable in all that space? What

[118] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004) 1.
[119] Salman Rushdie, "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line* (London: Vintage, 2003) 408.
[120] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[121] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 412.

did she have the courage for, how could she *expand*? To be good or bad, she told herself: but to be *new*."[122]

There are many names for people, objects and ideas that have crossed borders and "migrant" is one of them. Cundy identifies "reconstructing migrant identity"[123] as one of the central themes of *The Satanic Verses* and the next paragraphs will discuss the link between migration and identity in a greater detail.

3.3 Migration

Of various manners of border-crossing, migration[124] is the one Salman Rushdie is especially interested in. He claims that "the migrant, the man without frontiers, is the archetypal figure of our age."[125] *The Satanic Verses* eloquently proves this point, as many of the characters are migrants of some sort, and the novel pays a great deal of attention to the effects of this process on the human mind and on society. Bhabha notes the in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie reminds us that "the truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision."[126]

The decision to migrate, "to move from one country, place, or locality to another"[127], may be, according to Avtar Brah, motivated by many different causes: people leave their homelands in search of better economic conditions, political freedom or possibilities to study. She stresses the importance of motivation in the analyses of migration, but she refuses to divide migrants into neat categories.[128] In *The Satanic Verses*, migrations are motivated by all sorts of reasons: the Sufyans, the Imam and Mahound left their former homes under the influence of politics and migration was a necessity for them. Saladin Chamcha and Otto Cone take migration as a welcome possibility to get rid of their past and to start anew (how much successful they are in suppressing their previous lives, is another question).

In Brah's opinion, the reasons for leaving are not the only crucial thing: "If circumstances of leaving are important, so, too, are those of arrival and settling down. How and in what ways is

---

[122] *The Satanic Verses*, 145.
[123] Cundy, 67.
[124] In case of migration, the thematic and formal realm of Rushdie's writing meet once more, as migration serves as a vital metaphor in his fiction: in *The Satanic Verses*, even death is an instance migration, as an act of border-crossing. The death of Gibreel's father is described in this manner: "His father had finally run hard enough and long enough to wear down the frontiers between the worlds, he had run clear of his skin and into the arms of his wife, to whom he had proved, once and for all, the superiority of his love. Some migrants are happy to depart." (*The Satanic Verses*, 19)
[125] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 415.
[126] Bhabha, 7-8.
[127] "Migrate", Merriam-Webster, An Encyclopædia Britannica Company, 8.8. 2011, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/migration.
[128] Brah, 182.

a group inserted within the social relations of class, gender, racism, sexuality, or other axes of differentiation in the country to which it migrates?"[129] The case of Saladin's two arrivals to Britain exemplifies this importance of circumstances: when he arrives for the first time, he is a wealthy Indian boy of laudable intention to study in England and become as English as possible, but when he falls down to England from Bostan, he is considered, to use his own words, one of the "fishing-boat sneakers-in", an "ugando-kenyatta".[130] Circumstances matter: the presence or absence of a passport can change the reception of a human being completely.

Saladin's adventures in England also illustrate what Cundy sums up as the link between "the migrant's preconceptions about his new home and the identity he invents to coincide with those preconceptions."[131] Saladin's migrant identity mirrors his ideas of England and Englishness, and for a substantial part of his adult life, he has been struggling to make himself worth of his own fiction of England.

The unprecedented massive migration is one of the decisive characteristics of the latter half of the 20th century. It is a powerful source as well as the indicator of economic and political conflicts, but also of cultural renovation. As Rushdie explains in "Step Across This Line", he has "tried to stress the creative aspects of such cultural commingling. The migrant, severed from his roots, often transplanted into a new language, always obliged to learn the ways of a new community, is forced to face the great question of change and adaptation."[132] He praises the migrant's world-view that has been enlarged by his flight from the known world into a foreign one. In *Shame*, this opinion is expressed by the narrator who speaks in migrants' name: "We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown."[133] There are many examples of the creative resources stemming from the migrant condition: language sensibility,[134] ability to observe a culture from outside, the possibilities of combining different cultures and traditions. As he explains in his defence of *The Satanic Verses*, "*mélange*, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it."[135]

---

[129] Brah, 182.
[130] *The Satanic Verses*, 140.
[131] Cundy, 69.
[132] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 415.
[133] *Shame*, 85.
[134] Rushdie himself is a paragon of these stimulating effects of migration (that causes the necessity to step out of one's mother tongue) on linguistic abilities. The fact that his mother tongue was Urdu might be seen as one root of his unmistakeable artistry in English. Similarly, Vladimir Nabokov or Joseph Conrad, other writers famous for their masterly command of English, were also non-native speakers.
[135] "In Good Faith", 394.

However, migration and its effects do not receive only unconditional praise, both in Rushdie's essays and in his fiction. The narrator of *Shame* asks what the worst thing about migration is, and he provides the answer as well: "It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases … we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time."[136] Migration can obviously also cause the feeling of uprootedness, of "not-belonging", and there is a long list of mainly unhappy migrants in *The Satanic Verses*, such as Hind Sufyan or the Imam, who perceive England not as their new home but as a forced exile. In this case, migration can also make people cling to the ways and traditions of the old home much stronger than they ever did when they were there, especially, as Rushdie points out, when they are not offered a warm welcome in the country they come into: "Many migrants, faced with the sheer existential difficulty of making such changes, and also, often, with sheer alienness and defensive hostility of the peoples amongst whom they find themselves, retreat from such questions behind the walls of the old culture they have both brought along and left behind."[137] The impact of the contrast of the way how things supposedly worked at home and how they function here, in the new land, can thoroughly shatter one's identity and cause, as Gopal puts it, a feeling of "ambivalence about both belonging and exile"[138].

In Rushdie's account, migration is not only a matter of travelling in space but it is equally a journey through time.[139] In "Imaginary Homelands", he refers to the past as to the "country from which we have all emigrated"[140], and underlines the essential role of history in the process of migration. Migration means to leave the actual place and, in Gopal's words, "to be cut off from history"[141], to step out of the personal and public past. The sense of continuity and connection to entities as family or nation is refracted by migration. The past has to be reconstructed by the migrant, but it is one of Rushdie's major arguments that the reclaiming of the past can never be fully achieved, for it is "deal[ing] in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost"[142]. It is impossible, according to Rushdie, to revisit the childhood home or to bring back the past, for the human memory, both individual and collective, is a space of constant transformation, a creative zone of unceasing metamorphosis.

---

[136] *Shame*, 87
[137] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 415.
[138] Gopal, 165.
[139] History is another vital topic in Rushdie's writing: his novels are, as Gopal puts it, often based on "the juxtaposition of small stories with the larger epic of the nation, or private narratives with the great sweep of public History"(Gopal, 160).
[140] "Imaginary Homelands", *Imaginary Homelands*, 12.
[141] Gopal, 164.
[142] "Imaginary Homelands", *Imaginary Homelands*, 167.

There is not a one true History that can be discovered, only histories: small pieces of the broken mirror, all of them evenly fictional and evenly important.

Rushdie's books offer an apt record of privileges and pitfalls of migration, and if Frantz Fanon was, as John McLeod points out, the leading voice in the analysis of the psychological effects of colonialism,[143] Rushdie's fiction, though it is not a work of a trained psychoanalyst, might be read as a telling account of the mental condition of postcolonialism, and especially of the psychological effects of migration on human identity.[144]

3.4 Diaspora

Diaspora, "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions"[145] is closely connected to migration and borders, and since there are many people who have moved voluntarily or by force from their homelands, there are also several kinds of diaspora. People who have performed the act of migration for whatever reason are in result dispersed, they no longer find themselves among their own people and they have to respond to their new situation somehow. The word 'diaspora', Brah explains, is of Greek origin and consists of two components: dia, 'through', and sperein, 'to scatter'.[146] Brah also points out that "at the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora. … Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere."[147] She further notes that since diaspora refers to "dispersion from somewhere", the word embodies "a notion of a centre, a locus, a 'home' from where the dispersion occurs."[148] This tension between the departure and the arrival point is also vital, for it brings about other questions. Which of these places is the home – the old country behind, the new one before, or both of them in a different way? As Gopal notes, the question of "origin" in relation to diaspora is also a complex one, especially for people of later generations of migrant communities "whose passports, location, sense of belonging, and cultural affiliations are not always congruent."[149]

In her account, Brah comments upon the ambiguous potential of diaspora: "the word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of migratory experience. But diasporas are also potential sites of hope and

[143] McLeod, 20.
[144] Fanon is also directly mentioned in the novel (*The Satanic Verses*, 353).
[145] Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998) 68.
[146] Brah, 182.
[147] Brah, 182.
[148] Brah, 182.
[149] Gopal, 160.

new beginnings."[150] Both of these polarities, the new hope and the sense of irreparable loss, are articulated by the characters in *The Satanic Verses*. Brah is the author of the concept of "diaspora space" which she sets apart as distinct from diaspora and which might be enlightening for reading of Rushdie's novel. Brah's 'diaspora space' is "inhabited' not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as 'indigenous."[151] It includes both the "dispersed" and the "native"; it is the site "where the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native."[152] Rushdie's vision of London in *The Satanic Verses* supports this point of view, as it is interested in the complex cultural and social dynamics of the place, not just in the "native" or in the "dispersed". What the novel suggests is that the "border" between them is not as clear as it might seem.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call diaspora "a central historical fact of colonization"[153], as the colonial enterprise brought about large population shifts of all kinds. They also stress that the results of the numerous movements of people caused by the colonial enterprise did not end with the fall of the colonial rules: "The most recent and most socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized peoples back to the metropolitan centres. In countries such as Britain and France, the population now has substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples."[154] *The Satanic Verses* provides a lively manifestation of this statement – the Ellowen Deeowen, Proper London Gibreel and Saladin arrive to is a metropolitan centre where ex-colonial people have come back, and the novel observes the tension both inside the diasporic communities and between the migrants and the major population. The presence of people who are "the others" in Vilayet forces the British to ask what does it mean to be British and what is Britishness, where is the dividing line between not being British and being British. As Ashcroft et al. observe, "the development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, 'natural' cultural norm."[155]

Such a questioning of a unified cultural norm plays a substantial role in *The Satanic Verses*, where several ways of defining Britishness question each other, such as the conservative, idealistic and purist view of Britishness that Saladin Chamcha stands for and which Pamela, his native British wife, considers utterly ridiculous and fabricated. Mishal Sufyan, claiming

[150] Brah, 193.
[151] Brah, 16.
[152] Brah, 209.
[153] *Key Concepts, in Post-Colonial Studies*, 68.
[154] *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 70.
[155] *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*,70.

that "Bangladesh is nothing to me, just some place Dad and Mum keep hanging on about"[156], represents a new manner of Britishness which Saladin refuses to recognize at first. He perceives the Sufyans as foreigners, as the embodiment of the old home he had successfully abandoned. He thinks himself British and in his concept of Britishness, the Sufyan family cannot claim the same status. By this standpoint, he unwittingly supports Brah's argument. She observes that

> … the former colonial Natives and their descendants settled in Britain are not British precisely because they are not seen as being native to Britain: they can be 'in' Britain but not 'of' Britain. The term 'native' is now turned on its head. Whereas in the colonies the 'colonial Native' was inferiorised, in Britain the 'metropolitan Native' is constructed as superior.[157]

Saladin's rigid definition of Britishness gradually melts away when he himself is treated by the people he believed to be his fellow Britons as a foreigner, and, moreover, as a third-rate foreigner. When he discusses the problems of cultural affiliation with Mishal and Anahita, his first reaction stems from his vintage shop vision of Britain, but then he realizes he is no longer sure he knows what being British is: " … but they weren't British, he wanted to tell them, not really, not in any way he could recognize. And yet his old certainties were sipping away by the moment, along with his old life."[158] Saladin Chamcha doubts the quality of Sufyan girls' Britishness, but his own Britishness is not taken for granted by all people either: he is fired out of *The Aliens Show* because his presence makes the entertainment too ethnical. The hostility towards "the dispersed" is also manifested when Uhuru Simba is charged with the serial murders of old women and the rumours of the black magic in the diaspora community spread around London, or when Saladin is captured by the police and humiliated by the officers. In *The Satanic Verses*, the negative, derogatory opinion of immigrants can even affect the body of the victim: the metamorphoses of human beings into beasts and freaks at the Detention centre are the materialized wild fantasies of the immigrant. This gloomy, surreal episode draws attention both to the distribution of power between diasporas and the majority, and also to the role of language in such cultural struggles. When Saladin wonders what causes

[156] *The Satanic Verses*, 259.
[157] Brah, 191.
[158] *The Satanic Verses*, 259.

the mutations, Manticore explains: "They describe us … that's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct."[159]

This unfriendly approach towards immigrants and the negative images assigned to them are undermined, for example, by The Hot Wax Club. The local exhibition of wax figurines points out that the presence of "the other" people in Britain is no recent invention, and that the immigrants are not to be doomed as troublemakers, killers and voodoo practitioners:

> See, here is Mary Seacole, who did as much in the Crimea as another magic-lamping Lady; but, being dark, could scarce be seen for the flame of Florence's candle; - and, over there!, one Abdul Karim, aka The Munshi, whom Queen Victoria sought to promote, but who was done down by colour-barring ministers. [160]

The uneasy position of the "new" British people and their need to define themselves in relation to the majority is also expressed by the role the image of Saladin / the Devil acquires in the local diaspora community. Mishal explains to the unhappy, devilised Chamcha that he has become a hero, people are wearing t-shirts with his image and use him as a means of their self-definition against the hostile major society: "I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own."[161] This situation – when people are willingly identifying with an image that was first stuck on them as a humiliating label – exemplifies Rushdie's statement about a long tradition of insults changed into proudly worn names.[162]

With the ideas of crossing borders, migration and diaspora in the background, the next pages will seek to point out more concrete examples of how the locations and movements across them affect the construction of identities in *The Satanic Verses*.

[159] *The Satanic Verses*, 168.
[160] *The Satanic Verses*, 292.
[161] *The Satanic Verses*, 286-287.
[162] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands* (402); *The Satanic Verses* (93), viz Footnote nr. 77.

4. Locations

> *But the city in its corruption refused to submit to the dominion of the cartographers, changing shape at will and without warning, making it impossible for Gibreel to approach his quest in the systematic manner he would have preferred. Some days he would turn a corner at the end of a grand colonnade built of human flesh and covered in skin that bled when scratched …"*[163]

People and places are mutually important in the process of formation of their identities. One's character is influenced not only by the environment one is born into and grows up in, but the locations of all the actions of one's life are also decisive in some way. Places may impact human beings by their structure, visual aspects and history, by the possibilities they offer or lack, or, in some opinions, by their climate. Gibreel Farishta, in the last phase of his angelhood, concludes that "the moral fuzziness of the English was meteorologically induced"[164] and that in order to improve its ability to distinguish good and evil, the city should be "tropicalized". In the novel, places are represented as something that can be used as a means of root-taking: Mimi Mamoulian, Saladin's colleague, explains her obsession with buying places as a result of "excessive need for rooting owing to upheavals of Armenian-Jewish history."[165] Places are also capable of connecting people to history, both to their own, personal past and / or to the past times of the place: Changez Chamchawala keeps his house as a memorial of his late wife, and by preserving it in the way it was when she died he hopes to conserve the memory of her. By virtue of his house, Mirza Saeed is connected to the lineage of his family and also to the complicated history of the relationship between India and Britain; and Rosa Diamond experiences glances of the long-ago England due to the location of her house on the coast of the English channel. People are trying to posses places, to make them their own by various means: Allie Cone has an extensive collection of sundry Everests, an unknown girl at the party in the film studio has a map of London drawn on her breast, and Gibreel thinks he gets hold of London by possessing an A-Z guide to it.

Some places work as touchstones of identity and they are able to put people's ideas about themselves on test. The desert has famously been a crucible of the human character where one can listen to the voice of one's soul, but also has to face one's inner demons. The deserts in the novel have similar capacity: it is in the desert where Mahound struggles with his doubts,

[163] *The Satanic Verses*, 327.
[164] *The Satanic Verses*, 354.
[165] *The Satanic Verses*, 61.

where he fights Gibreel and receives the revelations (whatever source they come from), and it is in the desert where the passengers of the hijacked Bostan suffer their internment. The desert intensifies the extreme circumstances they find themselves in: "wrapped in heat and silence"[166], they start seeing ghosts and spectres.

The Himalayas, according to the story of Allie Cone, are endowed with similarly transformative powers. Since her ascent, she has been having visions, such as the ghost of Maurice Wilson or the icebergs on the Thames, and when she recounts her climb to the girls at Brickhall Fields Girls' School, she explains that "at that moment, … I believed it all: that the universe has a sound, that you can lift the veil and see the face of God, everything."[167] Allie believes that the mountain is the place "where all the truth went"[168], and her life after the encounter with the mountain will never be the same.

Not only do places influence people, but, obviously, human actions can transform the nature of places. As Ashcroft et al. explain, places come into being by the power language, that is to say, by the workings of the essential human capacity to name: "Mapping, naming, fictional and non-fictional narratives create multiple and sometimes conflicting accretions which become the dense text that constitutes place. In short, empty space becomes place through language, in the process of being written and named."[169] The importance of language for places lies not only in the process of place-naming itself, but also in the way in which a language shapes the reality: cities, states or other entities can be delimited, connected or separated by language. As the example of Jahilia shows, purposeful human effort can alter the nature of a place in a fundamental way, but people transform the locations of their lives also unknowingly, as places absorb, at least that is the way how *The Satanic Verses* put it, people's fears, hopes and dreams. In Gibreel's vision, the houses in London are no longer built of bricks or stone, but of human emotions.

As the previous sections have pointed out, the uncertain identities are common in the characters of *The Satanic Verses*, but the same works for its places. The following paragraphs will show that the London of the novel is an utterly ambiguous place, multi-faceted, constantly metamorphosing. The mountain, location of many important actions of the novel (Allie's Everest, Mahound's Mount Cone), is described as "land's attempt to metamorphose into sky", as "the earth mutated – nearly – into air."[170] When Allie recollects her ascent, she

[166] *The Satanic Verses*, 81.
[167] *The Satanic Verses*, 198.
[168] *The Satanic Verses*, 313.
[169] *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 174-175.
[170] *The Satanic Verses*, 303.

claims that "the mountain was diabolical as well as transcendent, or, rather, its diabolism and transcendence were one"[171], so the complex negotiations of good and evil in the novel are not limited to human or superhuman agents only, but their struggle literally "takes places".

Names are important for human identities as well as for the identities of locations, even though one may not realize their meaning. When discussing the etymology of the name of Mirza Saeed's house, the narrative voice comments upon this: "names, once they are in common use, quickly become mere sounds, their etymology being buried, like so many of the earth's marvels, beneath the dust of habit".[172] *The Satanic Verses* seeks to remove the dust of habit from the place-names: it is not accidental that the block of apartments from which Rekha Merchants jumps and Allie Cone falls unwillingly bears the name "Everest Villas", and that the sand city of sanctuaries and brothels is called Jahilia, meaning "ignorance".[173] Saladin and Gibreel have changed their names, so did Otto Cone, and the same thing is done for cities: "Pune, Vadodara, Mumbai; even towns can take stage names nowadays"[174].

Places function as metaphors for people and vice versa in *The Satanic Verses*. Cundy, for instance, uses Jahilia as a metaphor for Saladin: "his identity in the early stages of the text is mirrored in the form of the dream-city of 'Jahilia' – the city made out of shifty, unstable sand is a parallel to the attempts to construct a solid identity made by such as Saladin."[175]

As everything that happens has to "take place" somewhere, be it a real or an imaginary location, and the enumeration of all places in the novel would be impossible in the given scope, the discussion will be limited to some of the crucial sites in *The Satanic Verses*, namely the cities, as the novel and its interests seem to be closely knitted to the urban space, and to a few other locations that are of special importance.

4.1 Cities

Even though *The Satanic Verses* is an expansive novel, it may be argued that three cities are its decisive locations: London, Jahilia and Bombay. No matter how different these cities are in terms of their history and structure, they all share some important qualities in the novel. All of them can be, for instance, described as palimpsest cities. Palimpsest, in the definition provided by Ashcroft et al., is "originally the term for a parchment on which several inscriptions had been made after earlier ones had been erased. The characteristic of the

[171] *The Satanic Verses*, 303.
[172] *The Satanic Verses*, 217.
[173] Cundy, 80.
[174] *The Satanic Verses*, 17.
[175] Cundy, 80.

palimpsest is that, despite such erases, there are always traces of previous inscriptions that have been 'overwritten'".[176] The areas the cities occupy are also such parchments where many erasions have been made and yet, the traces of the previous "inscriptions" still survive in the memories of the inhabitants, in concrete buildings or in the ambiguity of their genii loci. The city of Jahilia has been "rewritten" many times – from unstructured dunes to a place with distinct features, from a city of multiple festivities and sins to the city of one God. Bombay underwent many transformations and rebuildings,[177] and so did London. The deconsecrated church Gibreel and Allie occupy in Scotland is another palimpsest place, this time with the interesting touch of the play of profanity and sacredness to it.[178] The palimpsest qualities of the cities correspond to the same features of the human protagonists. Cundy observes that for Zeeny Vakil, Saladin's personality is also like a palimpsest: "a slate wiped clean of Indiannes and reinscribed by Anglophilia."[179] Palimpsests are not stable inventions, be they human or urban, and the "original" text may start to leak through the later inscription any time, and it indeed does.

Cities are important factors in the complex processes of identity formation in *The Satanic Verses*; they are not only the stage sets but also the means of achieving a personality. Saladin's quest for Englishness is linked to his ability to absorb London: "Of material things, he had given his love to this city, London, preferring it to the city of his birth or to any other … dreaming of being the one to possess it and so, in a sense, *become* it."[180] When Zeeny Vakil wants him to come back to his "Indian" self, she suggests that he should make his acquaintance with Bombay, to accept the city and, in a way, become it.

The city is the emblem of the globalized world and it enables some of the most important events of *The Satanic Verses* to happen. It is a space allowing and also producing hybridity. As Otto Cone explains to his family, "the modern city … is the locus classicus of incompatible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side upon the omnibus."[181], and even though Allie and his wife are bored with his lecturing, his comment is very relevant for the whole novel. The mélange of histories, languages and beliefs, the clashes inside the cultural arena Brah calls "diaspora space", the massive

[176] *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 174.
[177] Rushdie seems to be much preoccupied with the fortunes of his native city, Bombay: especially *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* rings a toll for the old city that is being overwritten, but he comments on the transformations of Bombay also in *Midnight's Children* and in *The Satanic Verses*.
[178] The dialogue of sacred and profane places is discussed more thoroughly in a separate section of the thesis.
[179] Cundy, 67.
[180] *The Satanic Verses*, 399.
[181] *The Satanic Verses*, 314.

anonymity that brings both opportunities and freedom, but also lack of stability and feeling of being lost and uprooted – all these phenomena that characterize the novel are properties of the metropolis. The cities of the novel are also presented as giving birth and life to the eclectic, hybrid popular culture which is another mirror for the fragmented identities of the characters. When Saladin watches TV, he is puzzled by the fact that all the programmes are presenting freaks, bizarre creatures, androids and mutilate bodies and the effect of this "box-watching was to put a severe dent in what remained of his idea of the normal, average quality of the real …"[182].

4.1.1 London

The capital of Vilayet is given many names even when it is mentioned for the first time in the novel, and multiple appellations suggest that there is not only one London in the book. There are quite many of them, as Gibreel and Saladin find out: "This is no Proper London: not this improper city. Airstrip One, Mahagonny, Alphaville. … Babel: a contraction of the Assyrian 'babilu'. 'The gate of God'. Babylondon."[183] Godard's bleak vision of a future metropolis meets the Assyrian gate of God and Brecht's wrecked pleasure city. The exiled Imam even likens it to Sodom, and there is also the supposedly Dickensian London, "reborn city, even rearranged"[184], a London that has been "altered - no, *condensed*, - according to the imperatives of film."[185] Catherine Cundy claims that "The Vilayet of *The Satanic Verses* … with its capital, the mysterious Ellowen Deeowen, it is both imaginative territory and geographical reality – both the arena onto which the fantasies of the migrant are projected and the harsh reality which confronts them when they literally come down to earth."[186]

As the list of names suggests, the city's identity cannot be grasped easily and it resists any attempts at defining and categorizing. When Gibreel is walking its streets, thinking about the possibilities of purifying the fallen capital, London is described as having "grown unstable once again, revealing its true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city that had lost its sense of itself and wallowed, accordingly, in the impotence of its selfish, angry present of masks and parodies …"[187]. Gibreel, after being summoned by the supposedly divine entity, perceives the city as a place in want of redemption. He no longer sees the "real" city built of stone, cement an other ordinary materials, but as a "tortured metropolis whose fabric was now

[182] *The Satanic Verses*, 406.
[183] *The Satanic Verses*, 459.
[184] *The Satanic Verses*, 422.
[185] *The Satanic Verses*, 422.
[186] Cundy, 69.
[187] *The Satanic Verses*, 320.

utterly transformed, the houses in the rich quarters built of solidified fear, the government buildings partly of vainglory and partly of scorn, and the residences of the poor of confusion and material dreams."[188]

Where Gibreel's archangelic perception spots sin and decay, Saladin had once seen the earthly Paradise. Saladin has been dreaming of London since his boyhood, of "flying out of his bedroom window to discover that there, below him, was – not Bombay – but Proper London itself, Bigben Nelsoncolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen."[189] His imaginary London resembles a place out of BBC miniseries where moderation and good manners rule. During the course of the novel, he is forced to realize that the London he believed in might be just a fiction, one out of many, and that his beloved metropolis has far more faces than he had ever dreamed of, not all of them suitable to be printed on a picture postcard. When he is suffering from his involuntarily mutation, the once-paradise city mutates as well. The horned and tailed, sulphur-breathing Saladin finds himself in the city of London transformed into a multi-devotional hell: "Jahannum, Gehenna, Muspellheim."[190]

London of *The Satanic Verses* is a place that transforms its inhabitants. As Priyamvada Gopal puts it, "London becomes the exemplary site of exploration of what happens to cultural identity and historical consciousness when it is taken outside its comfort zone and natural habitat."[191] Saladin and Gibreel are obvious examples, but Hind Sufyan also feels the effects of the metropolis on her: "now she was no longer just one, just herself, just Hind wife of teacher Sufyan; she had sunk into anonymity, the characterless plurality, of being merely one-of-the-women-like-her".[192] For people like Saladin (until the fall) or Otto Cone, London is a home-by-choice, a place of new beginnings, of a glee abandonment of the past, the huge city provides them with a chance to construct themselves anew, whereas other characters see London in a completely different way: as a dangerous, hostile environment that can do them no good.

The city not only works as a transforming agent in the novel, there are also attempts to change the nature of the city, to grasp it, define it, possess it. [193] Even though the passage in which Gibreel in his archangelic frenzy floats above London and entertains the possibility of

[188] *The Satanic Verses*, 320.
[189] *The Satanic Verses*, 38.
[190] *The Satanic Verses*, 254.
[191] Gopal, 166.
[192] *The Satanic Verses*, 250.
[193] In her analysis of the novel, Gopal works with Sukhdev Sandhu's interesting idea of "metrography". She writes that, according to Sandhu, "Rushdie's literary rendition of London should be placed in a longer tradition of black and Asian writing about the city". By this "metrography", migrants are trying to give meaning and shape to the chaotic, frightening metropolis (Gopal, 169).

transforming it into a tropical city is hilarious and fantastical, the idea of the Indiannization of London (as the enumeration of the qualities London would acquire sounds like making it a second Bombay) and thereby improving its morals presents an interesting counterpart to Saladin's initial attempt at anglicizing himself in order to become a better man. The relationship to the city tells on something about the migrants' attitude towards their former colonizer: "Where Chamcha saw attractively faded grandeur, Gibreel saw a wreck, a Crusoe-city, marooned on the island of its past."[194] While Saladin's method is a conquest by submission to the city, he achieves, in Cundy's words, "a self-image almost wholly derived from the colonizer."[195] Whereas Gibreel seeks to transform the city, to make it as much alike his preferred India as possible, and refuses to tailor himself to the metropolis, Saladin willingly reshapes himself in order to fit in his beloved capital.

London also becomes a representative of the whole world that is engaged in the battle of good and evil, or rather between the opinion that it is possible to differentiate these two and the one that they are indistinguishable. It is the place where the conflict between Gibreel and Saladin reaches its supernatural peak; the metropolis becomes the battlefield where the two actors, one of them believing himself to be transformed into the devil, the other one considering himself the chosen archangel of the Lord, seek to find each other in order to achieve the final confrontation.

4.1.2 Bombay

Bombay somehow encircles the whole novel and underlines the theme of "coming back": it is the city where Gibreel and Saladin spent their childhood, and it is Bombay again where their conflict is brought to its human resolution. The city leaves its mark on both of them and their relationship to Bombay proves decisive for their fates in the end. Saladin and Gibreel are reflecting one another, and in Gopal's reading, the London of *The Satanic Verses* is a city "comparable to, even implicitly twinned, with Bombay."[196]

Saladin does not notice these sibling qualities at first and only sees Bombay as a counterpart of London. The comparison between the two is not favourable to the city of his birth: for him, Bombay represents excess, chaos and barbarism, and London stands for moderation, order and civilization. In this respect, Saladin adopts the colonial discourse of the centre and the margin: according to this notion, as Ashcroft et al. put it, "everything that lay outside the

[194] *The Satanic Verses*, 439.
[195] Cundy, 73.
[196] Gopal, 168.

centre was by definition at the margin or the periphery of culture, power and civilization"[197], and Bombay in Chamcha's view is exactly this periphery. He refuses to recognize Bombay as his home and seeks to "root" himself in London. Bombay does not give up easily, it can still cast its spell over Saladin and when he returns to the city at the beginning of the novel, his view of himself, his mental balance and his accent are all distracted: under the pressure of Bombay, they slip, in Zeeny Vakil's words, "like a false moustache."[198] Saladin's native metropolis turns out to be a crucible of his new identity, and reveals its serious flaws and inconsistencies. Since this fatal temporary homecoming, the world Chamcha used to know and understand transforms in a universe of inexplicable misfortunes appointed by unknown forces and the once so clear distinction between barbaric Bombay and neat and tidy London breaks down.

Bombay is portrayed as a multiple-faced city: with its mixture of Hindi, Parsi, Muslim, Sikh, British and many other cultures, it is even more diverse than Proper London, where the diaspora communities are still perceived as a minority, as a deviation from the norm. Bombay of *The Satanic Verses*, as Bombay of all Rushdie's novels, is a palimpsest city. It is not a one, unified entity but many cities, living and dead, existing in one place: skyscrapers are compared to "tombstones marking the sites where the torn corpse of the old city lay"[199], and Zeeny Vakil reminds Saladin of the fact that the Bombay of his childhood is definitely not the only one existing. Moreover, the city he remembers is perhaps a complete fiction: "What do you know about Bombay? Your own city, only it never was. To you, it's a dream of childhood. Growing up on Scandal Point is like living on the moon. … That was Wonderland, Peristan, Never-Never, Oz."[200] In the end, when Saladin becomes Salahuddin and reconciles with his father, Zeeny recommends embracing the city as one of the ways in which he could "find himself" again: "you should really try and make and adult acquaintance with this place, this time. Try and embrace this city, as it is not some childhood memory that makes you both nostalgic and sick. Draw it close. The actually existing place. Make its faults your own. Become its creature, belong."[201]

Gibreel does not seem to feel any especially strong emotion, be it positive or negative, towards Bombay, he is similarly uninterested in his native city, Poona, and – until he thinks he has been chosen to purify it from sin – in London. For Gibreel, Bombay is rather a setting

[197] *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 37.
[198] *The Satanic Verses*, 53.
[199] *The Satanic Verses*, 12.
[200] *The Satanic Verses*, 55.
[201] *The Satanic Verses*, 541.

for his performance which can be easily replaced. The city has no claims on him, perhaps for the reason there are no people or buildings he hates or loves: his parents and his foster uncle are dead, and so is Rekha Merchant. The important difference between Gibreel's and Saladin's Bombays is that for the latter one, the city has the capacity of being a home.

4.1.3 Jahilia

The city of Jahilia has not been the same since its beginning, it was structured out of ever-changing desert, and its story tells a lot about metamorphoses:

> The city of Jahilia is built entirely of sand, its structures formed of the desert whence it rises. It is a sight to wonder at: walled, four-gated, the whole of it a miracle worked by its citizens who have learned the trick of transforming the fine white dune-sand of those forsaken parts, – the very stuff of inconstancy, – the quintessence of unsettlement, shifting, treachery, lack-of-form, – and have turned it, by alchemy, into the fabric of their newly invented permanence.[202]

The sand city was famous for its festivals and markets, for the countless deities it offered to the pilgrims, for the large population of poets, and also for its dark sides: prostitution, blood feud, death cult. This city of multiple fineries and many ways of sinning had female embodiments: Grandee's wife Hind who resisted the flow of time, and the three goddesses, Uzza, Manat and Al-Lat. Jahilia expelled Mahound and forced him into exile, and it also brought upon him the great crisis of his life, the incident of the Satanic Verses that had shaken his belief in himself, in the revelations he had been receiving and in the nature of God. As Mahound's influence grows, he manages to threaten Jahilia by "cutting off its life-blood, its pilgrims and caravans"[203], and, together with other agents, Mahound's power "had hardened the town, so that it lost its old, shifting provisional quality of a mirage and became a prosaic place, quotidian and (like its poets) poor."[204] When Mahound returns victoriously from his exile in Yathrib, he wants to purify the now petrified city, to change it from a place of multiplicity and sin into a place of oneness and virtue. The result is a palimpsest once more. On the surface, Jahilia has "Submitted" – "the call to prayers five times a day, no alcohol, the

[202] *The Satanic Verses*, 93-94.
[203] *The Satanic Verses*, 360.
[204] *The Satanic Verses*, 359-360.

locking up of wives"[205] – but the new, pious and puritanical inscription cannot wholly replace the old Jahilia that still stream between the lines of the rules of the Book.

4.2 Shaandaar Café

Shaandaar Café, the new home of the exiled Sufyan family, is one of the most important locations of the novel. First, it is a tangible manifestation of the cultural tensions in Britain. The successful restaurant that brings to London the dietary miracles of the "Far East" is a huge success not only among the migrant population, but also with the "white" British. The popularity of Shaandaar indicates the strange paradox that some aspects of the cultural and ethnic heterogeneity are welcomed and celebrated, such as cooking or the Asian martial arts,[206] while other, such as the migrants themselves, are not so well-accepted. The living conditions at Shaandaar also cast doubt upon potentially idealizing view of the diaspora community: Hind Sufyan takes part, together with the borough councils, in exploitation of her tenants who are referred to as "temporary human beings, with little hope of being declared permanent."[207]

Shaandaar is the place where Saladin's gradual acceptance of India and of "his people" reluctantly begins, and where he confronts "the real world"[208], or rather one of the real worlds he did not encounter before, the city that used to be visible but unseen for him. When Joshi brings him to Shaandaar, he is desolate through and through about being unwillingly cast "back into the bosom of his people, from whom he'd felt so distant for so long!"[209] By degrees, he becomes quite fond of the Sufyans and of the place, as his attempt to rescue the family from the burning house proves. Shaandaar Café is also the place where the supposed archangel and supposed adversary finally meet, after being separated since their last encounter in Rosa Diamond's house. What happens is not the fatal combat of good and evil, but a meeting of two men who have caused one another much harm. This encounter results in a surprising act of forgiveness. The fact that Shaandaar does not end up as a pile of ashes might be also suggestive of another reconciliation: Mishal Sufyan, urged by her mother's troubled ghost, renovates the place and opens it again, and thus perhaps comes to terms both with her heritage of the second generation immigrant and of being British in a new way.

---

[205] *The Satanic Verses*, 376.
[206] The issue of the martial arts in *The Satanic Verses* comments upon the curious facts of cultural reversal: Mishal and Anahita, the girls coming from the Far East, are trained in these "exotic, Asian" skills by British Jumpy Joshi.
[207] *The Satanic Verses*, 264.
[208] *The Satanic Verses*, 264.
[209] *The Satanic Verses*, 257.

4.3 Sacred Places, Profane Places

The Satanic Verses pays a great deal of attention to the dynamics of sacredness and profanity, and it is therefore interested in places related to these two categories. The author himself articulates this notion when he claims that "throughout the novel, I sought images that crystallized the opposition between the sacred and profane worlds."[210] In his essay "Is Nothing Sacred?" Rushdie mentions the etymology of the word "sacred": it goes back to Latin "sacrare" which means "to set apart as holy"[211]. The act of establishing sacredness (and thereby profanity as its opposition) is thus connected with the location of the sacred – it is set apart, mentally or / and physically. There are quite many places that might be regarded as sanctuaries in the novel, although some of them are not likely to be considered as such at first sight. All the sanctuaries, be they consecrated to whom- or whatsoever, share one feature in common – they are very close to the theatrical space, to a stage, and people who inhabit them turn into actors and start playing roles, wearing costumes or even taking stage names.

The first place that probably comes to mind in relation to the sacred places in *The Satanic Verses* is Jahilia, the city where the struggle between the multiplicity and oneness of the divine is held. The dualism that remains at the core of the city, even after its conversion, is materialized in the duality of Mahound's harem and The Curtain. Rushdie explains that the harem and the brothel provide the opposition between the sacred and the profane world he wants to examine:

> Harem and brothel are antithetical worlds, and the presence in the harem of the Prophet, the receiver of a sacred text, is likewise contrasted with the presence in the brothel of the clapped-out poet, Baal, the creator of profane texts. The two worlds, pure and impure, chaste and coarse, are juxtaposed by making them echoes of one another.[212]

The two places are arguably not clearly defined opposites, one standing for total profanity and another for absolute sacredness, as nothing is pure and only-so in *The Satanic Verses*. They are both secluded and accessible only to the privileged, and both places are presented as being partly arranged for the audience, both are driven by exact rules. Mahound's house and The

[210] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 401.
[211] "Is Nothing Sacred?", *Imaginary Homelands*, 416.
[212] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 401.

Curtain[213] are each other's convex mirrors – they reflect the structure of one another, and they exaggerate each other's prominent features: the supposedly spotless virtue of Mahound's house mirror the supposedly pitch-dark sin of The Curtain. Yet, surprisingly enough, the ladies of The Curtain are not female devils, but women who most of all desire the ordinary chaste life of the servants of their husband, and therefore stage it with Baal in the leading part.

Apart from the sanctuary of the revelation and the sanctuary of lust, there used to be many deliberate shrines in Jahilia, consecrated to the countless deities that were offered to the pilgrims. In order to cleanse Jahilia of its polytheism, Mahound gives order that the sanctuaries of the former gods and especially goddesses should be destroyed immediately, and this attitude reveals the connection of the belief and of the place where the devotion is performed. The story line about Ayesha and the village does not lack its holy place either, as Mecca itself plays an important role in it, although it is not actually there. The absent place functions as a magnet that draws the villagers on the pilgrimage.

The sacred places may be found also in Bombay and in London, although these are different holy places. They are not designed for the worship of god, but for secular reverence. Hot Wax Club should probably be a room for careless entertainment, but furnishings and procedures that are executed there suggest that it is a place where also holy and unholy matters are handled. The wax figurines represent either the "saints", the bearers of the unknown history of culturally, ethnically or otherwise "alien" people in Britain (Mary Seacole, Abdul Karim, Ignatius Sancho), or the "villains", the oppressors, people associated with hostile attitudes towards "the other" people (Enoch Powell, Oswald Mosley, Edward Long).[214] The rituals performed at Hot Wax may be understood as an articulation of the effort of the diaspora community in London to consolidate their identity by defining their saints and their enemies. The ceremonies also point to the universal need of human beings in what Rushdie call a post-god Western society: they are, in the "secular, materialist culture, some sort of replacement for what the love of god offers in the world of faith."[215]

The house at Scandal Point is an example of a sanctuary of a woman and of the past. Saladin's childhood home is kept untouched in order to honour his late mother, Nasreen I, and the remaining inhabitants also perform rituals to emphasize the holiness of the place – they put on costumes and play their roles. Once more, the meaning of such gestures is ambiguous: the holy memory of a deceased woman is worshipped by the acts Saladin perceives as utter

[213] Another place-name casting light on its bearer's identity: as Rushdie explains, it is called "Hijab" after the modest women dress ("In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 401).
[214] *The Satanic Verses*, 292.
[215] "Is Nothing Sacred?", *Imaginary Homelands*, 421.

blasphemy. For him, the house represents a taboo place, and embodiment of his unresolved relationship to his father and to India. In the end, when he consents to the demolition of the house, the shrine of childhood is "deconsecrated" and Saladin becomes an adult, secular man. Only a few actual sanctuaries are mentioned in Saladin's and Gibreel's story. One of them is "Jamme Masjid [mosque] which used to be the Machzikel HaDath synagogue which had in its turn replaced the Huguenots' Calvinist Church"[216], and this palimpsest shrine, located in London, speaks for itself quite clearly. Another one is a church in Scotland that has been turned into a house, with the former graveyard as a garden: "living in a deconsecrated Freekirk converted – the quasi-religious term sounded strange to Chamcha – by an architect friend of Allie's who had made a fortune out of such metamorphoses of the sacred into the profane."[217] This profitable metamorphosis of the sacred into the profane is another demonstration of the parallelism *The Satanic Verses*, for The Curtain may be considered such a metamorphosis as well.

4.4 The Air

Last in this account, but actually the first location of the novel is not a common-place in literature, when one does not take sci-fi into account. *The Satanic Verses* begins in the air with an accident, but arguably not by accident. This "most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic"[218] might be read as one of the most important metaphors of the whole novel. In the air, entities of all kinds cannot but float, and floating, being on the move and not-grounded, is the state of many characters. The air is described as "that soft, imperceptible field which had been made possible by the century and which, thereafter, made the century possible, becoming one of its defining locations, the place of movement and war."[219] The fact that *The Satanic Verses* commences in a place that was not regularly accessible for the human race until the second half of the 20th century, indicates the interconnection of the novel with this particular era. *The Satanic Verses* was also made possible by the century, for planes, terrorism, advertisements and the cinematic culture are indispensable components of the novel. The observation that "when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible"[220], which is also conveniently placed in the first chapter, describes both one of the methods of the novel and also the outset of Gibreel's and

[216] *The Satanic Verses*, 285.
[217] *The Satanic Verses*, 433.
[218] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[219] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.
[220] *The Satanic Verses*, 5.

Saladin's transformations. Together with them, traditional sources out of which one's identity is usually constructed also end up in the air, and they are presented as extremely disintegrated and incidental:

> … equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, land, belonging, home.[221]

The presence of the above listed items in the sky is not quite habitual. In contrast to them, clouds seem to be rather appropriate phenomena to be found in the sky, but at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses* the clouds seem to be placed in the sky on a special purpose and not by a mere caprice of nature as usual: on the one hand, the cloud is something essentially amorphous, on the other hand, it is able to appeal to the human perception in numerous shapes and forms. This cloudy, ever-changing environment reflects the situation of the two falling actors and the ceaseless transformations of the clouds may be read as a prolepsis of Gibreel's and Saladin's future adventures: "out of the white came a succession of cloudforms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, gods into bulls, women into spiders, men into wolves … and Chamcha in his semi-consciousness was seized by the notion that he, too, had acquired the quality of cloudiness, becoming metamorphic, hybrid …"[222] Saladin's observation is very much to the point: at the beginning, both of them acquire this metamorphic, hybrid quality, and they keep it for the rest of the novel.

The airy sphere is not restricted to the first chapter only. Flying is an important activity in the novel, both with the assistance of planes, flying carpets or without them. Gibreel, the supposed angel, is especially prone to it. In one of his dreams, he is flying above a city with the Imam on his back, and at the moment when he is most sure of being the archangel, he feels himself hovering above London. The flights the characters take from one place to another voluntarily should not be underestimated either, but they belong more to the next chapters.

[221] *The Satanic Verses*, 4.
[222] *The Satanic Verses*, 6-7.

5. Movements

> *He should have known it was a mistake to go home, after so long, how could it be other than a regression; it was an unnatural journey; a denial of time; a revolt against history; the whole thing was bound to be a disaster.*[223]

As has already been mentioned, locations matter in human life, but so do movements people perform among them. As Cundy observes, "the migrant's identity is transformed through the very act of migration"[224] in Rushdie's fiction. Crossing the border that divides home and all the place that are not home, has been considered a most effective means of discovering one's true identity and finding one's place in the society.[225] Travelling, changing air, vagrancy – all of these have been employed as ways (in the literal sense) of self-discovering in literature, especially in genres such as Bildungsroman[226] or in fairy-tales, and the process of getting to know oneself is often likened to a journey. In *The Satanic Verses*, the journey functions as a means of revealing that there is no such a thing as one's true identity that can be found somewhere and held for ever. It is "on the road" where the irrevocable conflicts inside the human nature and in the fabric of the world are revealed. As Rushdie puts it in *Step Across This Line*, "The journey creates us. We become the frontiers we cross."[227] It is also true that in many stories, the once so despised and disdained home suddenly seems the right place to be in, when compared with other places. Stepping across lines, undergoing journeys, making pilgrimages – all these movements are able to alter people's identity in a fundamental way. In the following paragraphs, the importance of journeys and pilgrimages and the role of home in the formation of identity will be discussed, though not in an exhausting manner, as the novel is populated by restless characters that are almost constantly on the move.

5.1 Quests, Journeys and Pilgrimages

In *The Satanic Verses*, many of the characters are on their way somewhere most of the time. But for what reason do they perform these travels, and to what ends? In *Step Across This Line*, Rushdie asks and answers the question "What make people cross borders?" He comes up with several possible reasons, all of them being manifestations of love of some kind: he retells the

[223] *The Satanic Verses*, 34.
[224] Cundy, 68.
[225] Martin Hilský, "Preface", *King Lear / Král Lear* (Brno: Atlantis, 2005).
[226] Gopal suggests that *The Satanic Verses* may be read as a type of anti-racist Bildungsroman with Saladin as the main protagonist (Gopal, 168).
[227] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 410.

story of the Little Mermaid and of Conference of the Birds, the first as an example of a quest for love of a man, the latter for love of a god.[228] Why do people cross borders and set out on pilgrimages in *The Satanic Verses*? The reasons are similar to those for which the Mermaid parts from her sea and the birds from their nests: Gibreel goes to England for his love of Allie Cone, Ayesha and Salman the Persian leave their homes because of religious devotion. Saladin abandons India in order to conquer his beloved England, Allie crosses the world for her infatuation with mountains. None of them is the same at the end of these journeys. Most obviously, travels have, at least in *The Satanic Verses*, the power of changing one's physical appearance and abilities. Gibreel's halo and Saladin's horns emerge after their landing on the English shore, Gibreel's halitosis appears and disappears as he moves from India to England and back again, Ayesha returns with white hair and later with golden brows from her excursions with the Archangel, but even these startling characteristics are only symptoms of the inner developments.

Rushdie argues in *Step Across This Line* that "the idea of overcoming, of breaking down the boundaries that hold us in and surpassing the limits of our own natures, is central to all the stories of the quest"[229], and this thesis tries to demonstrate that *The Satanic Verses* are also a story of the quest, of the quest for identities. The introductory chapter tried to comment on what identity might be, but what is a quest? The Merriam Webster Dictionary explains that it is "an act or instance of seeking", more specifically, "a chivalrous enterprise … usually involving an adventurous journey."[230] Quest is a journey one undergoes in order to achieve something valuable. The idea of the "quest for identity" might perhaps seem slightly strange, for the quest in the common sense of the word implies a concrete notion of the target, be it the Holy Grail or a better job, whereas the quest for identity may not be necessarily undertaken knowingly or willingly. The search for identity is often a by-product of the initial search for some more specific phenomenon: what starts as an attempt to find love or a new home might easily end in the need of answering the question that resonates throughout *The Satanic Verses*: "What kind of idea are you?"[231] All the quests in the novel provide the people who undergo them with results totally different from their initial expectations. On the way to their supposed goals, people often find out that they have been longing for the wrong things, and they are forced to see themselves in a different way: not as unified, harmonious wholes, but as

[228] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 408-409.
[229] "Step Across This Line", *Step Across This Line*, 410.
[230] "Quest", Merriam-Webster, An Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 2 August 2011, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quest.
[231] *The Satanic Verses*, 500.

"conflicting selves jostling and joggling within these bags of skin"[232], and they are left "with a hole in their pictures of the world that they could not paper over."[233] Many of these quests end up as failures, some of them fatal: Gibreel does not live happily ever after with Allie, the villagers of Titlipur do not reach Mecca (in the down-to earth way of seeing things), Saladin does not conquer England. The collapse of the great expectations forces them to look on themselves from a new perspective.

The journeys of *The Satanic Verses* are always mentally transformative and they support Rushdie's argument of *Step Across This Line*. Allie's mountaineering is not only a sport activity but also a means of spiritual development: "she was a woman who had been brought to transcendence, to the miracles of the soul, by the hard physical labour of hauling herself up an icebound height of rock."[234] The pilgrimage to the Arabian Sea reveals the many hidden characteristics of all the participants; it questions their faith in God and in Ayesha, shatters their ideas about themselves and finally makes them emigrate from this world to another one. Mirza Saeed escapes this migration to Paradise / drowning, but he, who embarked on the journey as a rational, modern man, trying to save the bunch superstitious "crazies", is on his return as shaken and destroyed as the mansion he arrives to. The moment of his death is even more puzzling, for in his vision, he sees the sea parting himself and Ayesha walking through it. Is it a victory of God over the doubter's soul, or a distracted mind of a broken man at work? Salman the Persian who left his home for Mahound goes back as an embittered man whose quest produced totally different results, the former zealous believer returns as a broken nihilist. Saladin, when he goes back to Bombay for the second time in the novel, is a fundamentally changed human being, a man to whom the sign of equation between Bombay and home does not seem so awkward any longer.

5.2 Homeleaving and Homecoming

Among the locations essential to the formation of one's identity, home seems to be the most prominent one, as it is supposedly the place where one's character is shaped. To quote Rushdie's beloved film *The Wizard of Oz*, "there's no place like home".[235] But what is a home after all? What is this place no place is really like? Is it a place at all? A constellation of people and objects? A memory? A fiction? Brah asks the same question and offers her answer: "On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In

[232] *The Satanic Verses*, 519.
[233] *The Satanic Verses*, 488.
[234] *The Satanic Verses*, 198.
[235] *The Wizard of Oz*, dir. By Victor Fleming, prod. by Metro-Goldwin-Mayer, USA, 1939.

this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality."[236] This dichotomy is what Hind Sufyan experiences in the novel: the split between two homes, between the lost, unattainable Bangladesh and the present, not-desired England. The puzzling facts about homes are multiple, and Brah goes on asking: "When does a location become home? What is the difference between 'feeling at home' and staking claim to a place as one's own?"[237] These questions are important for the reading of the novel, as home seems to be quite an issue in *The Satanic Verses*, and many of the characters have serious troubles concerned with their homes. In all the storylines, there is a repeated structure of "there and back again."[238] Gibreel and Saladin go from India to England and then back to India, Mahound leaves Jahilia and finally returns to it, Mirza Saeed travels to the Arabian Sea and returns to Titlipur. The easy way of putting it would be to say that they are all coming home in the end. But are they indeed? If the world was "the place we prove real by dying in it"[239], then homes may be the places we only prove real or unreal by remembering them, loving them or detesting them.

Gibreel seems to be rather rootless and "homeless" for most of the novel: his childhood home was a tent near the airport and he is not attached to his apartment at the Everest Vilas. Arguably, his only serious attempt at homing the novel mentions is his relationship with Allie Cone, and it ends in a disaster. During his purifying mission in London, he even becomes actually homeless. When he comes back to India, it is for his career, not to resolve some unfinished business or out of homesickness. At first sight, he seems to be a real patriot, cherishing the Indian, "home" cultural and dietary products more than everything Europe and especially England can ever produce, as his dialogues with Saladin show, but he does not seem to have any real home. Before the beginning of the novel, he also loses the home he used to have in his faith in God, and his inability to find a new spiritual lodging proves fatal to him. Gibreel's problem is the lack of any home at all, while Saladin has to choose the right home out of several.

Saladin abandons his childhood home in Bombay because he has the impression he does not belong there, and he thinks his real home is England. Until his fatal fall from Bostan, he had believed the city of London to be his real home, his home-by-choice, as opposed to the Bombay he could not opt for. In fact, England proves to be a home-by-denial, an exile where

[236] Brah, 192.
[237] Brah, 193.
[238] Subtitle of J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*.
[239] *The Satanic Verses*, 533.

Saladin is hiding from the unresolved issues back in India. His relationship to Bombay therefore remains turbulent: he fights the city, he detests it, and tries to break its spell over him. When explains to Zeeny Vakil, he says that "in this city here I grew up I get lost if I'm on my own. This isn't home. It makes me giddy because it feels like home and is not. It makes my heart tremble and my head spin."[240] After the fall, Saladin discovers the other facets of London he could not see before, and he experiences a growing estrangement from his wife, house, from the city and from the whole country. He falls out of love with them and thereby "uncreates" them. As a result of his break-up with his English home-by-choice, he returns to India and realizes a profound change has happened: "only a few days ago that back home would have rung false. But now his father was dying and old emotions were sending tentacles out to grasp him."[241] While taking care of his dying father, he is finally able to reconcile himself to his childhood home at Scandal Point, to its inhabitants and, metaphorically, to its ghosts. The validity of this reconciliation is proved by his, although reluctant, consent for the demolition of the house. At the end, the novel leaves the once more renamed Salahuddin as a man who is about to construct a new home, not as an act of suppression, but as an act of free will. In his essay on *The Wizard of Oz*, "Out of Kansas", Rushdie makes an argument that may serve as a useful footnote to the reading of Saladin's "homecoming":

> The truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started to make up our own lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that "there's no place like home" but rather that there is no longer any such place *as* home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz, which is anywhere, and everywhere, except for the place from which we began.[242]

The quest of identity can be interpreted as a quest for a new home, as a journey from the childhood home to the adult home one builds for oneself. The observation that the characters are going back home is therefore not completely true, as the home they leave and the home they return to are two different spaces, although they may sometimes occupy the same geographical spot.

---

[240] *The Satanic Verses*, 58.
[241] *The Satanic Verses*, 514.
[242] *Step Across This Line*, 33.

6. Conclusion

> *He though, at times, of Zeeny Vakil on that other planet, Bombay, at the far rim of the galaxy: Zeeny, eclecticism, hybridity. The optimism of those ideas! The certainty on which they rested: of will, of choice! But Zeeny mine, life just happens to you: like an accident. No: it happens to you as a result of your condition. Not choice, but – at best – process, and, at worst, shocking, total change. Newness: he had sought a different kind, but this was what he got.*[243]

After mapping some of the multiple routes and locations of *The Satanic Verses*, this concluding chapter will try to suggest what is the outcome of these journeys. How do they affect the identities of the characters? Are Saladin and Gibreel at the end different from those two men who fell from Bostan? Are they still Saladin and Gibreel? Can one change as much as to become someone else? How does life happen to them?

Migrations, travels and journeys are vital to the transformations of identities in *The Satanic Verses*. The identities develop during the course of the novel, but to think that Saladin and Gibreel were whole and perfectly stable before their fall from Bostan and that only then the metamorphic, hybrid era of their selves began would mean to misunderstand the novel. The rifts and disparities characterized their identities long before, but the journeys and the places they encountered made these cracks visible and accelerated the already on-going processes. As Søren Frank notes, Gibreel's metamorphosis began in the moment he lost his faith in God, and Saladin's started even earlier – on that day he found a lost purse full of British notes on the pavement.[244] The confrontation with unknown spaces, histories and people, the caprices of fortune, their own knowing and unknowing choices: all these phenomena cast doubt on the things Saladin and Gibreel used to take for granted.

The novel presents their loss of a supposed wholeness and their search for a wholeness of a new kind: wholeness as a fragile balance of contradictory impulses. Saladin and Gibreel are confronted with the necessity of a compromise and hybridity; they learn gradually that our selves are not completely ours to choose, that only "our lives teach who we are."[245] And not only our lives, but also our deaths. The hybridity of identities and the inaccessibility of purity are reflected equally in the way the characters live and in the manner they quit this world. As Allie asks when thinking about her father's absurd death: "can a man's death be incompatible

[243] *The Satanic Verses*, 288.
[244] Frank, 151 – 152.
[245] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 414.

with his life?"[246] Many of the plentiful deaths in *The Satanic Verses* are actually quite incompatible with the lives of the late. All purist, totalizing attitudes are somehow shattered at the end – Mirza's absolute scepticism, Mahound's total monotheism, Baal's prevailing selfishness and cowardice. In the novel, the discrepancy between one's life and death is not understood as incompatibility or as some error in the destiny, but rather as a manifestation of the unpredictable tensions and mismatches our selves are made of. When Mahound, the Prophet of oneness, is dying, he addresses not his sole, pure God, but the goddess he long ago expelled from the heavens of Jahilia, Al-Lat. Moreover, a voice answers him in the name of the goddess and he thanks her for the "gift of death". When Mirza Saeed, once a rationalist, now a nihilist, dies, he experiences a profound change as well: the sea parts together with his heart and Mirza walks with Ayesha to Mecca through the newly opened passage.

The novel is a deliberate celebration of hybridity, it is "a love-song to our mongrel selves",[247] but it certainly does not understand hybridity as a deliberate, free construction of one's self out of bits and pieces he or she knowingly chooses. This is a hard lesson to be learned especially for Saladin who has believed for so many years that it was possible to select the components of one's self at will. The hybridity as presented in *The Satanic Verses* is a complex survival strategy comprising of coming to terms with the inevitable circumstances of our lives, for, as Rushdie argues, "we do not come naked into the world":

> We bring with us an enormous amount of baggage, so therefore, limitation. And that baggage is history, family history and a broader history too, and we're born into a context, and we're born as the child of our parents, and as the descendant of our family, and as the people who live in a certain house, and there's a lot of stuff which is just given – which is not just our to make.[248]

If the hybrid identity is to work, the inborn, given and imposed components have to be acknowledged and reconciled with. If we cannot choose completely who we are, who is responsible for what happens in our lives? Is therefore anything like the freedom of will possible in the world so complex and interconnected that no one can foresee the results of his or her choices? Rushdie articulates this in his reflection on the issue of the character in the contemporary novel:

---

[246] *The Satanic Verses*, 298. Otto Cone who has survived the Nazi death camps dies in an elevator accident.
[247] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 394.
[248] "Interview with Salman Rushdie" by Jonathan Noakes, London, 8, July 2002, *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide* (London: Vintage, 2003) 17.

> … the ancient idea of character being destiny. You know, "a man's character is his fate"… And it seems to me that there is something about the modern world that makes that not true any more. … That is to say that there are now all kinds of gigantic global phenomena, whether they are economic or military or whatever they might be, which actually determine the fates of individuals … in a way that is completely beyond our control.[249]

The Satanic Verses is a novel, as has already been mentioned, closely bound to the conditions of the end of the 20th century, to the chaotic and ever-changing post-modern world. In contrast to many great works of literature, character is no longer presented as destiny in *The Satanic Verses*; the characters do not deserve their fates: their fates happen to them. If there was anything like "measure for measure" in the novel, Saladin and Gibreel should both die or should both get another chance, for they are both tarred with the same brush. There are no villains and no heroes in the novel, only imperfect human and perhaps super-human but similarly flawed beings, and it is therefore impossible to say who would deserve what fate.
Even though Saladin and Gibreel were presented as contrasting personalities at the beginning, the dividing line between the two gradually blurs away, as the embrace in the final moments of their initial fall predicts. The narrative voice also ponders about this dilemma and comes up with a possible solution:

> Should we even say that these are two fundamentally different types of self? Might we not agree that Gibreel, for all his stage-names and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses; – has wished remain, to a large degree, continuous – that is, joined and arising from his past; … so that he still is a self which, for our present purposes, we my describe as "true"… whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of selected discontinuities, a willing reinvention; his preferred revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, "false"?[250]

Yet the voice immediately questions this view as a possible "intentionalist fallacy", for "such distinctions, resting as they must on an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogeneous, non-

[249] "Interview with Salman Rushdie", *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 18.
[250] *The Satanic Verses*, 427.

hybrid, 'pure' – an utterly fantastic notion! – cannot, must not, suffice".[251] One may argue endlessly which of the two is worse in ethical terms, but there are no clearly defined boundaries between the good and the evil, and there are no pure selves. But for all the hybrid qualities, the novel seems to insist on the cohesiveness of the self, however unexpectedly it may metamorphose.

One of the most important issues concerning identity the novel reveals and presents from different angles is the so-called argument between Ovid and Lucretius: as Mr Muhammad Sufyan puts it, "the question of the mutability of the self."[252] While Lucretius stands for the opinion that "whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers, … by doing so brings immediate death to its old self"[253], Ovid goes for the "immortal essences", for, "as yielding wax … is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our souls."[254] Mr Sufyan concludes his lecturing attempt to comfort desolated, newly mutated Saladin with stating that for him, it was always Ovid over Lucretius. The novel seems to agree with him, even though it does not propose straightforward answers in any respect. The horned and tailed creature tortured by immigration officers, the cold-blooded plotter, the loving son nursing his dying father – it is always the same human being, the same fate, and at the end, Sala(hud)din acknowledges all these disparate facets of his self as his own. According to *The Satanic Verses,* our identities are inexhaustible reservoirs of surprises for us, and we never change only because of the influences from the outside – there must be always something inner that responds. Evil is presented not as an external force that possesses us, but rather as something that creeps out from within us. It suggests that evil may in fact not be alien to humanity and coming from the outside, on the contrary: "we fall towards it *naturally*, that is, not against our natures."[255]

The Satanic Verses does not believe in totalities of any kind, and it seeks to reveal that all phenomena that are presented as such are merely fictions. Neither the good nor the evil are absolute. When Saladin runs into the burning Shaandaar Café in order to save the Sufyan family, the narrative voice wonders:

> Is it possible that evil is never total, that its victory is never absolute? Consider this fallen man. He sought without remorse to shatter the mind of a fellow human being; and

[251] *The Satanic Verses*, 427.
[252] *The Satanic Verses*, 276.
[253] *The Satanic Verses*, 276.
[254] *The Satanic Verses*, 276.
[255] *The Satanic Verses*, 427.

> exploited, to do so, an entirely blameless woman … Yet this same man has risked death, without scarcely any hesitation, in a foolhardy rescue attempt.[256]

In compliance with the theory that we fall naturally, not against our natures, it has been Saladin all the time, he was not just temporarily possessed by some evil element from the outside. Gibreel, the man with a unique capacity to love genuinely, is nevertheless willing to succumb to the satanic insinuations against Allie and kill her in the end. Yet the very same man saves the life of the author of his misery – Gibreel carries Saladin out of the burning house in his arms, although at that moment he knows who was the mysterious phone-caller. As the previous chapters have suggested, none of them is pure, none of them is "either / or". At some point, both of them make an effort to achieve purity, but they do not succeed.

As Angela Carter writes in her review, "the novel, after its rollercoaster ride over a vast landscape of the imagination, ends calmly – for one of the protagonists, at least – in reconciliation and home-coming and a necessary grief."[257] But why is it that one of them, and moreover the "devil", gets reconciliation and the "angel" commits suicide? And is there any "why" at all? Is there some fatal difference between these two? Why should Gibreel deserve death and Saladin reconciliation and an opportunity to start again, if they are not different types of the self and both of them have committed "the unforgivable things"? Saladin himself does not perceive the result of his "duel" with Gibreel as anything he would deserve by any of his virtues: "It seemed that in spite of all his wrong-doing, weakness, guilt – in spite of his humanity – he was getting another chance. There was no accounting for one's good fortune, that was plain."[258] Why is it Saladin who survives and Gibreel dies? Rushdie himself sums the conclusion of his novel in this way:

> Chamcha survives. He makes himself whole by returning to his roots and, more importantly, by facing up to, and learning to deal with, the great verities of love and death. Gibreel does not survive. He can neither return to the love of God, nor succeed in replacing it by earthly love. In the end he kills himself, unable to bear his torment any longer.[259]

---

[256] *The Satanic Verses*, 467.
[257] Angela Carter, "Angels in Dirty Places: Review of *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie", *The Guardian*, Friday 23 September 1988, 4 July 2011 http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/1988/sep/23/fiction.angelacarter Friday 23 September 1988.
[258] *The Satanic Verses*, 547.
[259] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands*, 398.

It is through love of God or through the love of fellow men and women that people can, in Rushdie's opinion,[260] achieve wholeness (even though no stable wholeness, but an "open", mobile structure). Saladin is saved by his ability to finally come to terms with his past, with the inevitability to death as the moment of acceptance and confirmation of one's identity.

In contrast to Gibreel who keeps his pseudonym until the very end, Saladin takes his old name back, and this gesture confirms his acceptance of his being impure, hybrid, not "either-or", but "all-of-these-at-once". The resolution of the novel might perhaps be a creation of the higher powers who have been taking an interest since the beginning, but the narrative voice somehow melts away at the end and does not elucidate the concluding pages in any respect. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke also notes that no higher powers, but "human beings triumph in the end. Gibreel who is bent on fate and God, cracks up, but Saladin who lives on the human plane, succeeds."[261] Saladin experiences a kind of revelation at the end of the novel, but there are no accompanying eclipses and thunders. Simple things, not earth-shaking, surprising truths are revealed: the power of forgiveness, the indispensability of tolerance, the human capacity for dignity and good. What is being stressed throughout the novel, unambiguously, is the importance of love for the survival of all patchwork creatures – "this question about being loved and being recognised – to be really seen"[262], "that you are only recognised if somebody else believes in you, somebody else creates you."[263] Saladin is saved (at least for a while) by finding someone who loves him and recognizes him, and by being able to say an affectionate but reconciled good-bye to his childhood home. The wish Baal gives Salman the Persian as a parting gift perhaps reaches Saladin through the many links and connections of the novel: "And I hope you find home, and that there is something there to love."[264] As Gopal observes, "ironically, in a novel which radically challenges ideas of origins and essences, resolution is enacted through a return, albeit to the heterogeneous and constantly transforming country, rather than a mythical homeland."[265]

Some critics, such as D.C.R.A Goonetilleke,[266] argue that *The Satanic Verses* provides one of the few straightforward, even sentimentalist happy-ends in Rushdie's writing. However, there still seems to be a great deal of "unfinished business", of ghosts that are not likely to fade away quickly. Although the novel provides some solutions, the reader is left with many

[260] "In Good Faith", *Imaginary Homelands* 395.
[261] Goonetilleke, 91.
[262] "Interview with Salman Rushdie", *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 32.
[263] "Interview with Salman Rushdie", *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*, 30.
[264] *The Satanic Verses*, 387.
[265] Gopal, 170.
[266] Goonetilleke, 91.

unresolved issues that cast fundamental doubts on the supposed unequivocal happiness of the last pages. Most probably, this is not a result of the author's negligence. Were it not for Saladin's devilish nursery rhymes, would Gibreel's and Allie's relationship have survived? Will Saladin be able to transplant himself back to Bombay? Will he learn how to live with the remorse and with the feeling of belonging to two places at once and to none of them properly? Who was the narrative voice and how did he / she influence the conclusion of the novel? What are the implications of Saeed's and Mahound's death-bed "conversions"?

Apart from these, one more question, a troublesome and haunting one, remains echoing in the thin air after all the satanic and angelic revels are ended: "What kind of idea are you?"[267] This question and all the multiple answers the novel provides – without privileging any of them unequivocally – is perhaps the most important gift of *The Satanic Verses*.

[267] *The Satanic Verses*, 500.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Rushdie, Salman. *East, West*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1994.

--- *The Enchantress of Florence*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2008.

--- *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. London: Vintage, 2000.

--- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. London: Granta, 1990.

--- *Midnight's Children*. London: Pan Books, 1982.

--- *Shame*. London: Vintage, 1995.

--- *The Satanic Verses*. London: Vintage: 2006.

Secondary Sources

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Bakhtin, Michail. *Román jako dialog*. Translated by Daniela Hodrová. Praha: Odeon, c1980.

Bedford, Camel. *Případ Rushdie: Osm let zápasu za svobodu projevu*. Praha: Mladá Fronta, 1997.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Locations of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Bowers, Maggie Ann. *Magic(al) Realism*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Cundy, Catherine. *Salman Rushdie*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Fletcher, M.D. (ed). *Reading Rushdie*. Atlanta: Rodopi. 1994.

Frank, Søren. *Salman Rushdies Kartografi*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2003.

Goonetilleke, D.C.R.A. *Salman Rushdie*. New York: St.Martin's Press, 1998.

Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian Novel in English*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *O postmodernismu*. Translated by Jiří Pechar. Praha: Filosofický ústav AV ČR, 1993.

Hilský, Martin. “Úvod”. *King Lear / Král Lear*. Brno: Atlantis, 2005.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Reynolds, Margaret and Jonathan Noakes, *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*. London: Vintage, 2003.

Rushdie, Salman. “Imaginary Homelands.” *Imaginary Homelands*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

--- “In Good Faith.” *Imaginary Homelands*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

--- “Is Nothing Sacred?” *Imaginary Homelands*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

--- “Out of Kansas.” *Step Across This Line.* London: Vintage, 2003.

--- “Step Across This Line.” *Step Across This Line.* London: Vintage, 2003.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Electronic Sources

Carter, Angela. “Angels in Dirty Places: Review of *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie”, *The Guardian*, Friday 23 September 1988, 4 July 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/1988/sep/23/fiction.angelacarter Friday 23 September 1988.

“Chamcha”, *Urban Dictionary*, 13 November 2007, 6 July 2011. http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chamcha.

“Gabriel.” *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 07 Jul. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/223206/Gabriel>.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. An Encyclopædia Britannica Company, 2011. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

“Saladin.” *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 07 Jul. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518809/Saladin>.